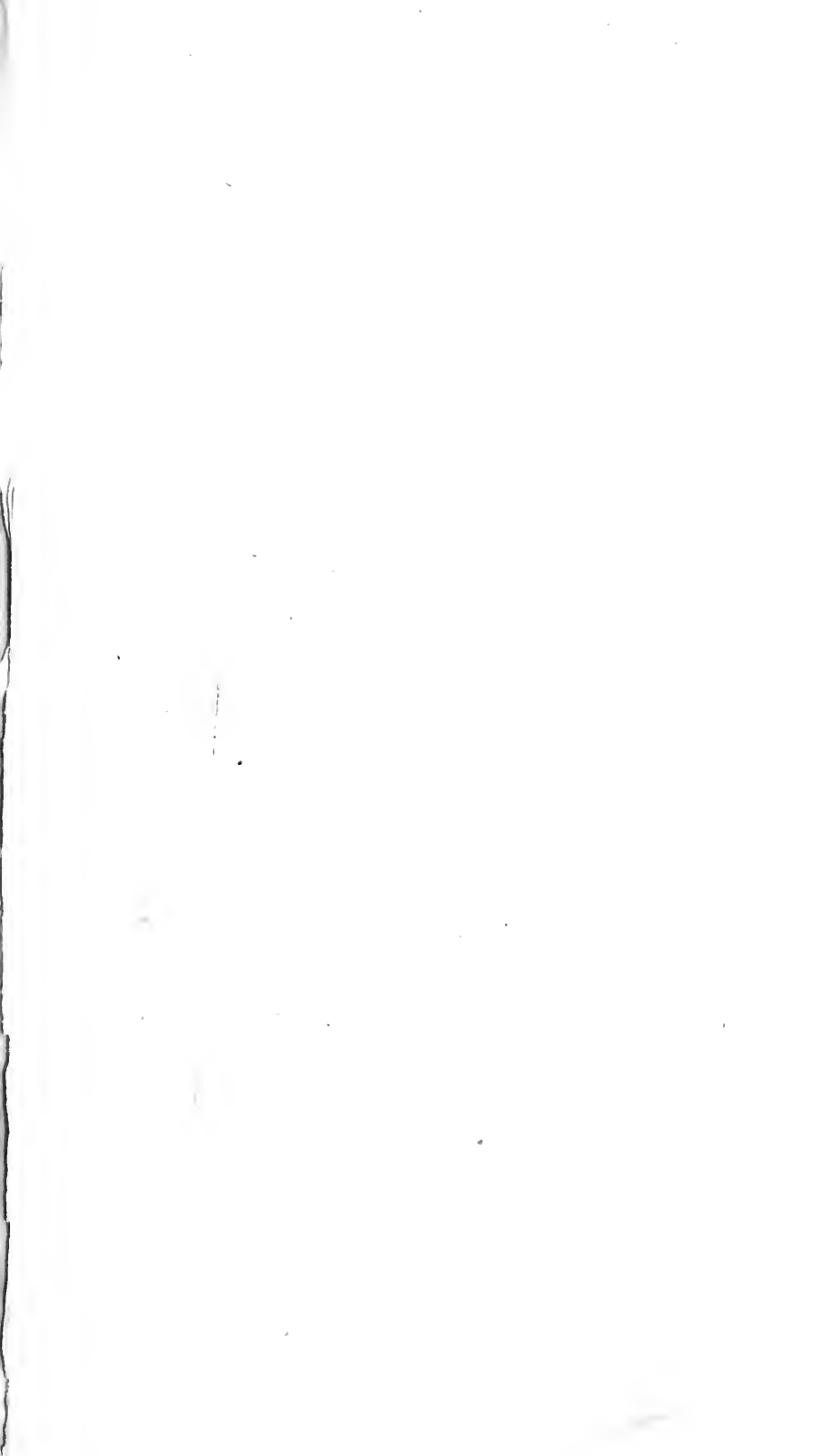




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VESTIGIA ANGLICANA;

OR,

Illustrations

OF THE MORE INTERESTING AND DEBATABLE POINTS

IN THE

HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES

OF

ENGLAND:

FROM THE EARLIEST AGES

TO

THE ACCESSION OF THE HOUSE OF TUDOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

STEPHEN REYNOLDS CLARKE.

*"Ce qu'on aurait voulu retenir de la lecture de l'histoire, se qu'on
aimerait à s'en rappeler."*

VOL. I.

London:

PRINTED FOR T. & G. UNDERWOOD, 32, FLEET STREET.

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P R E F A C E.

THE extreme popularity of Mr. Hume's acute and delightful volumes, having almost superseded the perusal of other histories of England, has caused a very general unacquaintedness with those topics connected with our early annals, which that author, either from haste or negligence, has carelessly passed over. It was somewhat in the spirit of supplying these deficiencies that the present work originated.

The formality of the orthodox rules of history has been considered by the irreverent spirit of the age as making a near approach to dulness, and consequently nothing is more frequently complained of, than the difficulty of remembering events, and the *ennui* with which the perusal of the remote period of English, as well as of other, history is apt to be accompanied: whatever noise the sieges, the battles, and the treaties occasioned in their day, nothing has a more extraordinary tendency to produce repose and quiet now. In the present attempt to recal the public attention to many important but almost forgotten particulars, the Author, by combining the stream of authentic narrative with various discursive enquiries into the traditions, the

manners, the literature, and the institutions of successive eras, has endeavoured to divest his subject of tediousness without impairing its utility, and to render the progress of events more interesting than is usually found in the severe and unbending style of the professed historian.

To effect so desirable a purpose, the author has ventured to choose the medium of Dialogue, as admitting with propriety every variety of digression; and thus perhaps "Conversations on the History and Antiquities of England" would have been the more appropriate title, had not the term, from its late frequent application, been understood to be restricted to publications chiefly elementary. The speakers are distinguished by the initial letters of Author, Friend, and Pupil. An adherence to a rule of the ancients, who fixed a local situation in which the disputants began their converse, has given an opportunity to trace the progress of architecture in England, by an examination of several of its most celebrated structures; which discussion, it is presumed, will justify the assumption of the term 'Antiquities' in the title-page.

The prejudices and misrepresentations of party theory the Author disavows, as alike hostile to fairness and to truth. In every doubtful point it has been his endeavour to enquire with diligence, and to judge with candour. In dismissing his work to the indulgence of the public, he gratefully acknowledges the ready access which he has found to the inexhaustible stores of the

British Museum, the value of which assistance it is impossible too highly to appreciate, as it has afforded him an ample opportunity to verify his facts by a constant reference to original authorities; nor can he pass over without acknowledgment, the ever open doors of the London Institution, which, by affording him the unrestricted use of a well-chosen collection of historical and topographical volumes, has essentially facilitated his progress.

Having originally intended to publish his work by subscription, the thanks of the Author are due to those Noblemen and Gentlemen who favoured him with their patronage, and above all to the condescending kindness of his Majesty, who had graciously permitted that his name should appear at the head of the list of the subscribers.

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VESTIGIA.

DISSERTATION I.

Stonehenge.

THE BRITONS.

A.—THE wide and apparently boundless dimension of Salisbury Plain, excites a feeling perfectly in accordance with the impression arising from the contemplation of that uncouth memorial of a distant age, Stonehenge; extent of space affecting the imagination in the same way as remoteness of time with ideas of reverence and solemnity.

P.—The mist of the morning at length dispersing, we find ourselves in the immediate vicinity of these remarkable remains of antiquity; but the first glance certainly does not excite those expected sensations of awe and wonder.

F.—Perhaps somewhat of the impression caused by Stonehenge in point of mere magnitude, when seen even at a small distance, is lost in the extent of the open country in which it is situated; and we should recollect, that these gigantic masses form not, like the Pyramids, an entire structure, but are evidently a confused and shapeless ruin.

A.—The origin of Stonehenge is involved in impenetrable obscurity; some authorities have attributed this fabric to the Romans, others to the Anglo-Saxons, or even to the Danes; but I prefer the conclusion of Dr. Stukeley,^a that it was an ancient British work in the form of a temple not admitting a roof; and as structures on somewhat a similar principle abound in Cornwall, whither the Romans never penetrated, as well as in Celtic Gaul, we infer that it was erected by the Druids.

P.—But can we suppose that a people like the British, unacquainted with mechanics, could by the force of mere manual labour, work a quarry and bring together stones of such immense magnitude?

A.—The first objection is soon overcome, by reflecting that the fine-grained siliceous sand-stone, of which the larger masses are all composed, is in its original state of a very soft nature, and that it lay probably near the surface, and not at a great distance; as the ridges of stone, called the Grey Wethers, scattered in the neighbourhood of Abury and Marlborough, are, if they have not been removed, of exactly the same substance; and your second difficulty is resolved by considering, that in most rude nations the perseverance of numbers has produced effects little short of miraculous.

F.—Having thus collected the materials of our fabric, let us learn how they were disposed.

A.—The temple seems to have been of an elliptic form,^b consisting of four concentric circles of rough angular pillars. The first or exterior circle contained thirty of these pillars, about fourteen feet in height, and supporting between each a cross-stone or impost, several feet in length; which impost stones formed a continued

^a Stonehenge a temple restored to the British Druids.

^b Stukeley.

rude entablature carried round the building; of these imposts six only remain: the next circle consisted of a range of stones placed singly, not more than half the height of the outer pillars, and of a harder nature, being an aggregate of quartz^a and other substances: the next or third circle seems to have formed the adytum or holy place, and is indeed the principal wonder which surrounds us. It differed from the other circles, as the masses of stone stood in pairs, united at the top by a cross-stone, and all of large dimensions, the height being twenty feet: some antiquaries reckon seven of these triple stones, or trilithons^b as they rather pedantically call them, and others but five; one of these trilithons fell so lately as the year 1797,^c from the effect of a severe frost, and two others only remain entire: within these was another circle of single stones, of a hard substance and of obelisk-like appearance, and it is probable that they enclosed an altar or place of sacrifice.

P.—This ingenious explanation, renders a confused aggregate of fallen and distorted ruins sufficiently intelligible; but can we trace any further vestiges?

F.—Surrounding the temple, if such it be admitted, we may perceive evident marks of a trench, as also those of a vallum or mound of earth, beyond, of considerable circumference.

A.—Yonder solitary stone denotes the approach to the principal entrance, and though somewhat effaced by the labours of the plough, here are evident remains of a raised avenue; and if we scrutinize the vicinity with a discerning eye, we shall discover, at the distance of nearly half a mile to the north, a space bounded by

^a Sir R. C. Hoare's Ancient History of South Wiltshire.

^b Stukeley.

^c Archæol. Vol. XIII.

slight banks of earth, which are supposed to have marked out the limits of a race-course or hippodrome, but whether this work was an addition of the Romans, seems a matter of uncertainty.

P.—Aye, that uncertainty gives a wonderful zest to the pursuits of the antiquary.

A.—It gives at least a stimulus to enquiry, and affords the pleasure of a conflict of opinion happily calculated to elicit the truth.

P.—In point of antiquity, I suppose Stonehenge surpasses any building upon record in the western parts of Europe.

A.—Though beyond the reach of record, it is imagined not to be quite so ancient as the remains of a druidical structure of greater simplicity at Abury,^a a few miles distant: those barrows or hillocks of earth still more ancient, and abounding in this neighbourhood beyond all other places in the world, and each forming the place of interment of chiefs and warriors, scarcely fall under the denomination of buildings.

P.—Unless we coincide in opinion with the honest gravedigger in Hamlet, that they are tenements which will last till doomsday. But in what period of the world do you conceive Stonehenge to have been erected?

A.—Antiquaries of good reputation^b place it about a century before the Christian era; it is, however, but mere conjecture. From my own feelings, rather than from any intelligible data, I am inclined to ascribe its erection, with Dr. Stukeley, to a much remoter age, or to a period at least three centuries earlier.

^a Stukeley—Abury, a temple of the British Druids.

^b King—*Munimenta Antiqua*; and Wood—*Choir Gaure*.

F.—Britain being described by Cæsar as possessing “an infinite multitude”^a of inhabitants, it is surely desirable to know something more of these people than is found in the pages of those historians who begin their narration with that great captain’s invasion, especially as the Britons have left behind them such a lasting memorial as Stonehenge.

A.—The monument before us is well calculated to excite the enquiry; but the object of the fabric, as well as the nation and age of the builders, has been alike disputed, though most authorities^b concur in representing a grove to be almost of indispensable necessity to the performance of druidical rites; and though in this extensive plain there is reason to suppose that few trees ever grew, yet from the general resemblance of the style of Stonehenge to druidical remains which are undisputed, I cannot doubt that the Druids were the architects; but whether the structure was erected for the purpose of worship, or of astronomical observation—as the seat of judgment, or the place of a general assembly of the order—may be fairly questioned: perhaps it united all these objects. The name Stonehenge is evidently Saxon—the hanging or pendulous stone: by the ancient British it was called *Choir Gaur*, a term by some understood to mean the great temple; by others, the dance of giants. Its present appearance well justifies the latter appellation.

P.—Though a little disappointed at the first impression, the longer I look at these venerable remains, the more I become interested, and admit that they well deserve their title, “the wonder of the west;” but,

^a De Bello Gal. lib. 5.

^b Cæsar, de Bel. Gal. lib. 6. Lucan, Pharsal. lib. 1. Pliny, lib. 16.

reverting from the building to its architects, I confess that they have long interested my imagination, and are associated in their groves and recesses with many a poetical allusion.

“ For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high;
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.”

F.—Such are the effects of literary enthusiasm. Without this aid of the imagination, in what light would the Druids appear?

A.—I am afraid, as the most intolerant priesthood that ever perverted the religious feelings of mankind to their own advantage. Their influence was unbounded: they could excite their countrymen to war; and, what was more wonderful in a barbarous nation, they could prevent a battle by their mere interference, when the lance of the warrior was extended, and the sword was drawn.^a

P.—Was religion their sole occupation?

A.—They united with it the education of youth, and they were dispensers of the law,^b which, being unwritten and transmitted by memory, was received by the people as rather of divine than human injunction. The order was numerous, and divided into three classes,^c bards, prophets, and priests: the Arch-druid resided in Mona, now the Isle of Anglesey, the chief seat of their superstitions, one of the most harmless of which was, the separating the mistletoe when found growing on the oak,^d a circumstance not often occurring, with much pomp and ceremony.

P.—Did the system of Druidism originate in Britain?

^a Strabo, lib. 4.

^b Cesar, lib. 6.

^c Strabo, lib. 4.

^d Pliny, lib. 16.

A.—Most writers incline to that opinion: its fame in this island was so celebrated, that the youth of Gaul were sent hither to be initiated in its mysteries, an obligation which in no very distant age that kingdom repaid by a different, and it may be hoped a better, course of instruction, as *Juvenal* informs us,

Gallia cauidicos docuit facunda Britannos.—*Sat.* 15, v. 41.

The British lawyers taught by prating Gaul.

P.—But amongst the doctrines of Druidism, can none be found which might promote the happiness of mankind?

A.—Though by the power of excommunication the Druids enforced the severest privations, and as judges inflicted the most terrible punishments, particularly in a truly appalling ceremony, where many human victims were enclosed in a hideous statue, formed with twigs of osier,^a and then immolated in the flames, it should be remembered, that they inculcated a belief in the immortality of the soul.

F.—Many of these sacrifices might probably be in the nature of criminal punishments. Alas, if we reckon up the number of victims offered, perhaps as unnecessarily, even in the course of the last century, to the severity of English law, Druidism may stand excused.

P.—The doctrine of the immortality of the soul being but imperfectly established in the Greek and Roman mythology, it becomes a matter of some curiosity to know whence the Druids derived it.

A.—From the resemblance which their tenet of the transmigration of souls bore to the system taught by the *Gymnosophists* in India, by the *Magi* in Persia, and to the opinions of *Pythagoras*, some have asserted

^a *Cæsar*, de Bel. Gal. lib. 6.

that the Druids imbibed their doctrine from that great philosopher; whilst others maintain, that he received his system from the lessons of this celebrated fraternity, when travelling in Gaul.

F.—Or can it be supposed, that, in the dispersion of mankind, the people whoever they might be that first settled in Europe, brought with them this remarkable doctrine from the East.

P.—That supposition leads to a point which I have been long desirous of ascertaining: who were the original inhabitants of Britain, and whence did they spring?

A.—There can be no doubt that Britain was first peopled from Gaul, but how Gaul itself was originally peopled, and in what age the Celts, or Celtæ, its most ancient inhabitants, took possession of that country, or whence they derived their source, are circumstances which remain utterly unknown in the darkness of antiquity.

F.—But of conjectural elucidations you will not complain that there is any deficiency.

A.—We can scarcely call those systems elucidations, which gravely deduce the Celts from Gomer, the eldest son of Japhet, whose posterity, say some authors,* under the names of Gomerians, Cimmerians, Cymbrians, or Celts, overspread the western parts of Europe soon after the flood.

P.—But as the Celts must have sprung from a common ancestor, Gomer is just as likely to have been their parent as any other patriarch.

A.—Doubtless; but these authorities, not satisfied with dispersing the posterity of Gomer over the whole of western Europe, which is a fact scarcely to be

* Pezron, *Antiquité*, &c. des Celtes.

admitted, would identify the Celts with the personages which figure in the ancient mythological fables, particularly the Titans, sons of Cœlus and Terra, which position they happily sustain by deducing the names of Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, and the rest from the Welsh tongue.^a

F.—They may perhaps have been led into this opinion by the statement of Cæsar,^b who relates, that the Gauls considered themselves as descended *ab Dite patre*; but the Grecian mythologists having given no posterity to Pluto, consequently “gloomy Dis” is as chimerical a Celtic stock as the patriarch Gomer: but it must be granted, in spite of these absurdities, that, anterior to the records of authentic history,^c the Celts occupied a considerable portion of Europe, whence, by the hostile invasion of other tribes, they were gradually expelled, and confined to the central and western parts of Gaul, to Britain and Ireland, and to a small portion of the north of Spain; and it is in these countries alone that they have left any lasting memorials.

A.—Of the high antiquity of the Celts there can be no doubt, they are unquestionably the most ancient people of the west of Europe; but whence and how they came there, can be no more satisfactorily ascertained than the derivation of the name Celtæ; of which Pelloutier, their historian, cannot give even a probable guess. Nothing can be more futile than the attempt to prove, by obscure resemblances of words and doubtful etymologies,^d the affinity of this people to the Greeks, the Hebrews, the Persians, or any eastern race.

^a Pezron.

^b De Bel. Gal. lib. 6.

^c Herodotus. Melpom. Dion, lib. 59. c. 49.

^d Pelloutier, Histoire des Celtes, liv. 1. c. 9.

F.—It is remarkable how little the Celts have been a conquering people: in Britain they have been long driven from the level country to the mountainous districts of the north and west.

A.—The intrusion of a foreign race had commenced before the invasion of Cæsar, who relates that the interior of Britain was inhabited by an indigenous and different people from those who dwelt in the maritime parts;^a these latter being the Belgæ, a nation of the Teutonic or Gothic stock (though that is disputed), who several times, in the pursuit of war and plunder, had formed various settlements, which the Britons were unable to extirpate.

P.—These irruptions of the Belgæ seem then to be the first authentic event in the history of Britain, though their precise period be not ascertained.

F.—But so admitting them, yet Britain must have had an anterior history of some sort or other. Herodotus,^b who lived four hundred years before Christ, alludes to the exportation of tin from the Cassiterides, now the Scilly Islands, a name meaning the land of tin, with whose inhabitants the Phœnicians carried on a considerable trade, which leads to the presumption that Britain was well peopled, even in those remote ages.

P.—And if it be doubtful whether these early Britons were acquainted with letters, yet a portion of their history may have been preserved by tradition; and it does not necessarily follow that tradition should be false. With Stonehenge before our eyes, I trust that a desire to know somewhat of the history of its founders will not be considered as irrational.

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 5.

^b Thalia.

A.—It is my sole regret that I cannot satisfactorily gratify your curiosity: from the Greek and Roman writers we can collect but little; and our only resource is to be found in certain monkish chronicles, amongst whom Geoffrey of Monmouth ranks as the chief. This ecclesiastic flourished in the reign of King Stephen, and became a dignitary of the church: his history in Latin of the “Kings of Britain” includes these remote ages; but whether the work was his own fabrication, or a translation, as he asserted, from an ancient British MS. brought from Armorica by Walter Calenius, archdeacon of Oxford, is uncertain. It is scarcely probable that this strange composition was the work of any one man’s invention; and besides, many circumstances might be collected from the floating traditions of the bards, which fraternity in his days existed in much glory. Milton says,* in apology for the part of his history derived from this source, that he tells these reputed tales in favour of the poets, who by their art well know how to use them judiciously.

P.—There are few persons who do not recollect with pleasure the excellent purpose to which Shakspeare has applied some of them.

A.—To begin then at the beginning. According to the Monk of Monmouth, Gomer, the eldest son of Japhet, or, as others say, Dis, his fourth or sixth son, planted colonies in the west of Europe about two hundred years after the flood, and established himself in this island, which he named Samothea. At his death, four kings, his posterity, reigned in linear succession—Magus, Saron, Druids, and Bardus. During the reign of this last monarch, the Samotheans were subdued by Albion, a giant, the son of Neptune, who, after enjoy-

* Hist. of Brit. book i.

ing the throne forty years, was slain in Gaul, opposing the progress of Hercules. Albion imposed his own name upon the country, which after his death was a long time tyrannized over by a lawless brood of giants, the posterity of his companions.

F.—I would rather prefer the derivation of the name Albion from the Greek *αλβος*—*white*, on account of the chalky cliffs on the coast; it is said also that, in the Phœnician tongue, *Alp* means a high mountain.

P.—It would be cruel to require chronological dates for these transactions.

A.—We now come to the arrival of Brute, or Brutus, the Trojan. This celebrated founder of a new monarchy was reputed to be the son of Sylvius, king of the Latins, the immediate descendant of Æneas, by Lavinia. Brutus had the misfortune to kill his father by an arrow in hunting; from which circumstance he was compelled to take refuge in Greece, where he married Innogen, the daughter of King Pandrasus; and having delivered many Trojans from a state of slavery, he passed into Albion with a fleet of three hundred ships, in search of a new settlement, where establishing himself, he called the kingdom, by rather a forced derivation from his own name, Britain.

P.—If not from Brute, whence is the name of Britain derived?

A.—That is a question which has never been satisfactorily answered. Camden's derivation of it is from Brith, a Celtic word signifying *painted*, in allusion to the practice of colouring the skin. Bochart derives the name from two Phœnician words, *bara tanac*, *the land of tin*; others from *pryd cain*, *white figure*: conjectures so dissimilar prove that the truth is really unknown.

P.—The voyage of Brutus seems nearly as feasible

as that of his grandfather Æneas, in Virgil, which, indeed, it somewhat resembles. Did not our admirable Pope, in his youth, attempt an epic poem with Brutus for his hero?

A.—And certainly no unpromising subject. We may suppose that there was plenty of fighting to overcome the brood of giants, which, when performed, the hero would fall quietly to work in building cities and promulgating laws. Indeed the foundation of Troja Nova, in time corrupted to Trinovantum, now London, was one of his first undertakings; and, if we may believe our authority, he also founded an university, which he called Greeklade, now converted into Criclade, not very distant from Oxford; the physical department of which established itself at Leechlade, now Lechlade, in the same neighbourhood.

F.—Truly an early specimen of archæology.

A.—As the Trojans were feasting on a certain occasion in Cornwall, a company of the giants broke in upon their festivity; they were, however, repulsed and slain, except Gœmagog, the hugest, a monster twelve cubits high, who was reserved alive, that he might wrestle with Corinaeus, the companion of Brutus, whom the giant suddenly seized, and with a terrible hug broke three of his ribs; but Corinaeus, enraged in return, took up the giant on his shoulders by main force and threw him headlong into the sea. This authentic transaction is yet commemorated by the name imposed upon the cliff, ever since called Lan-gœmagog, the Giant's Leap.

F.—This seems to be the first Cornish hug upon record.

A.—Brutus reigned twenty-four years; at his death the kingdom was divided amongst his three sons: the middle part, Lœgria, fell to the share of Locrine,

Wales to Camber, and Scotland to Albanact. But the dominions of the last having been invaded by Humber, king of the Huns—*O tempora!*—and Albanact slain, the surviving brothers took arms, and defeated the invader, who, falling into a certain river, which from that accident received his name, he was most opportunely drowned.

P.—Locrine is, I think, the hero of an old play, sometimes attributed to Shakspeare.

A.—His story is sufficiently dramatic. Amongst the spoils of Humber was Estrildis, a captive and beautiful princess, the King of Germany's daughter, with whom, as may be easily supposed, Locrine falls in love; which he should not have done, being already contracted to Guendolen, the daughter of the aforementioned Corinæus, now king of Cornwall: this lady he indeed married, awed by the power of her father, but continued a clandestine intercourse with Estrildis, who bore to him a daughter. At length Corinæus dying, Locrine proclaimed his affection for Estrildis, and divorced Guendolen. The enraged ex-queen departed to Cornwall, and collecting her father's friends, gave battle to her husband near the river Sture. Locrine was shot by an arrow; and Estrildis, with her daughter Sabra, being taken prisoners, were thrown into the river, which, as a memorial of her revenge, Guendolen proclaimed should in future be called after the young damsel's name, Sabrina, now the Severn.

P.—The female sex will acknowledge the story not to be without its share of poetical justice.

A.—Guendolen governed fifteen years in behalf of her son Madan, who, after reigning forty years, left two sons, Mempricius and Malim; the former of whom slew his brother, aspiring to share the kingdom; but after-

wards proving a cruel tyrant, he was fortunately devoured by wolves in hunting, near a place in Oxfordshire, from that event called Wolvercote. He was succeeded by his son Ebranc, who built the cities of York and Alcluid, now Dunbarton, and who was famous for the number of his children, having as many as there are weeks in the year. In the early part of his reign he gained many victories in Gaul and the Low Countries; but fortune proving fickle, he was afterwards repulsed by Brunchilde, lord of Hainault, at the mouth of the river Scaldis, or Scheldt. His son Brutus, named Greenshield, succeeding, retrieved his father's disaster, by winning a great battle on the river Hania, against the same Brunchilde, thus commemorated by our poet Spenser:

Let Scaldis tell, and let tell Hania,
And let the marsh of Esthambruges tell,
What colour were their waters that same day,
And all the moore 'twixt Elversham and Dell,
With blood of Henalois which therein fell;
How oft that day did sad Brunchildis see
The greene shield dyde in dolorous vermill.*

F.—These names seem of a later construction than suit a story pretended to be so ancient.

A.—To Brutus the Greenshield succeeded his son Leil, of whom nothing is further recorded than that he built Carlisle; and it may gratify the lovers of chronological exactness to be told, that this took place during the days of King Solomon. The successor of Leil was his son Rudhuddibras, or Hudibras, who founded Canterbury and Winchester.

P.—Here then is the origin of the name of our famous hero in the civil wars; another proof how much

* Faery Q. b. 2. canto 10.

these chroniclers were studied by our elder race of poets, though neglected by the present.

A.—We arrive next at a celebrated personage, King Bladud, who founded the city of Bath, whose medical waters he dedicated to Minerva. He is reported to have taught magic; and being a man of great invention, he made wings to fly with, but unfortunately fell down upon the temple of Apollo at Trinovantum; and so died, much renowned, after a reign of twenty years.

P.—But surely his hogs may put in an equal claim to celebrity, as without their sagacity in discovering the salubrity of the Bath waters, Bladud's fame would scarcely have surpassed that of the rest of his race.

A.—He is said to have founded an university at Stamford. It is observable, that the succession has hitherto run direct from father to son, and now reaching Leir, the son of Bladud, he transferred the sceptre to a female, as we shall presently see. Leir built Leicester, and reigned to a great age, in happiness and prosperity.

P.—The magic of Shakespear's genius has made the memory of Leir immortal. Does the tragedy differ materially from the chronicles?

A.—Not in its earlier parts, such as the father's enquiry concerning his daughters' affections, and their several answers; his anger with Cordelia, and the division of the kingdom between Goneril and Regan; also the diminution of his knights, and his being reduced to one attendant. But the catastrophe varies in many particulars: in the history, Cordelia marries Aganippus, a great king of Gaul, however he came by his Greek name; and on hearing her father's distress, she returns to Britain with an army, and replaces him on the throne, where he again reigned three years, and dying left the kingdom to this deserving daughter, then

become a widow. She ruled five years with much prosperity till Margan and Cunedagius, the sons of her late sisters, ill enduring that the realm should be governed by a woman, conspire against and depose her. Cordelia, incapable of bearing this reverse of fortune, kills herself in prison.

P.—Shakspeare has not then altogether forsaken the “faith of chronicles,” in making his play end unhappily: his glowing scenes have rendered these characters so familiar to us, from very childhood, that we can scarcely conceive them to be fictitious, but as truly historical as the most authenticated personages.

A.—Margan having quarrelled with Cunedagius, invaded his part of the kingdom, but was defeated; and Cunedagius governed meritoriously alone for many years. This was at the time of the building of Rome. He was succeeded by Rivallo, his son, a prince fortunate and wise, during whose dominion it rained blood for the space of three days; but the alarm occasioned by such an event was tranquillized by a celebrated prophet and prognosticator, Perdix, or Partridge by name, who explained the present evil as transient, and predicted many future happy events.

F.—As the doctrine of the transmigration of souls was established with these people, this surely must have been the same person who re-appeared in London, with so much eclat, as an almanac maker, in the reign of Queen Anne, under the same name.

P.—And again, perhaps, a very few years after, in Somersetshire, as an humble schoolmaster and parishioner with one Squire Allworthy.

A.—This is familiarizing the dignity of the historic muse, I am afraid, in a very unwarrantable manner. King Rivallo's successors were Gurguntius, Jago, or

Lago, his nephew, then Sisilius, Kimmarchus, and Gorboguda, or Gorboduc. Of these monarchs nothing memorable is recorded; the last was the father of Ferrex and Porrex, names familiar to English ears, as affording the earliest theme for a regular tragedy in our language, by Thomas Horton and Lord Buckhurst, played before Queen Elizabeth, in the Inner Temple, 1561. These ambitious princes, in the old age of their father, disputed the succession; the elder, Ferrex, having escaped an attempt upon his life, retreated into Gaul, whence returning with a considerable force, he gave battle to his brother, but was slain upon the field. Their mother Videna, less regarding, or rather mortally hating the survivor, Porrex, barbarously murdered him whilst sleeping in his bed: thus, according to Spenser,

“ Here ended Brutus’ sacred progeny,
Which had seven hundred years this scepter borne
With high renowne, and great felicity;
The noble braunch from th’ antique stocke was torne
Through discord, and the roiall throne forlorne.” ^a

F.—The chroniclers seem always to have adhered closely to monarchical government.

A.—At this period the whole nation fell into a state of anarchy, being rent into five kingdoms, and continued to rage with civil broils for the space of fifty years; at length Dunwallo Molmutius, king of Cornwall, subdued his competitors, and gradually reduced their dominions to his sway. He is represented as a brave and shrewd warrior. In his last battle, whilst the event was doubtful, he dressed six hundred of his own men in the armour of their slain enemies, and by this stratagem, approaching unsuspected, he gained a complete victory. Dunwallo Molmutius was the first king of Britain that wore a crown of gold; and he esta-

^a Faery Queene, b. 2. c. 13.

blished a code of laws which, absurd to relate, the chroniclers assert to have been long after promulgated in Latin, by Gildas, a British monk, and in Saxon by King Alfred. He is also said to have constructed the four great roads, known afterward as the Roman military ways, and to have exempted all persons from arrest whilst travelling upon them.

P.—In the confusion of dates, places, and names, we may observe throughout the history much similarity to the tales of knight errantry.

A.—As they both proceeded from the same manufactory, the cloisters of the monks, their resemblance is accounted for. The sons of Dunwallo Molmutius were Belinus and Brennus, who long disputed the kingdom: the latter at length, dispossessed, retired into Gaul, where he married the daughter of Seginus, duke of the Allobroges, and by the assistance of his father-in-law returned with a great host to Britain; but as he was upon the point of giving battle to Belinus, their mother, Canuvena, appeared and effected a reconciliation. The brothers then united in counsel to overrun Germany and Gaul, which having accomplished, Brennus attacks and conquers Rome.

P.—Can we suppose this to be the leader who, with his Gauls, would have surprised the Capitol, had the Romans not been alarmed by the cackling of some geese?

A.—Milton^a seems half disposed to admit that the real Brennus was a Briton: the circumstance however belongs more to Roman than to British story. In the reign of the next king, Gurguntius Barbirus, a more than commonly absurd fiction is related. As this monarch was returning from Denmark, after subduing the

^a Hist. of Britain, book 1.

king of that country, who refused to pay him tribute, he found about the Orkney islands thirty ships from Spain, crowded with men and women. The captain of the fleet, Bartholinus, who had been unjustly banished, entreated of the British king some lauds for himself and his companions. Gurguntius, taking his request into consideration, bestowed upon him the whole kingdom of Ireland, at that time lying unpeopled, to hold in homage.

P.—The story we can imagine to be fabricated in conformity to an old tradition, that Ireland was at one time colonized by a Spanish race; but it would hardly be suspected that this incident has absolutely been referred to, in an act of the Irish Parliament, to prove queen Elizabeth's superior title to the dominion of Ulster before Shane O'Neil's.^a

A.—To Gurguntius succeeded Guitheline, whose wife Martia introduced a new institution of laws, which King Alfred afterwards translating, called "Merchen Leage," or the Mercian Law!

P.—Of equal authenticity, no doubt, as the Molmudian Code.

A.—Guitheline was followed by his son Sisilius; to him succeeded Kimarus and Danius; the latter of whom left his throne to Morindus, his son by a concubine, a man of great strength, valour, and cruelty: he defeated a large band of Morines, or Picards, who invaded Northumberland; but at length he was suddenly caught up and devoured by a horrible monster from Ireland that infested the sea-coast.

P.—It is seldom that historians of this class, who write of such contests, give the victory to the dragon.

A.—Morindus left five sons, who each reigned in turn. Gorbonian, the eldest, was a man so just, that

^a Irish Statutes, vol. 3, 11th year of Eliz. sess. 3.

his early death was generally regretted ; the next brother, Archigallo, by his rapacity provoked a rebellion, and was deposed, Elidure, the third brother, surnamed the Pious, having been set up in his place. When this prince had reigned five years, as he was one day hunting in the forest of Calater, he chanced to meet his deposed brother wandering in a mean condition, who was now, with only ten followers, privately returned from exile. At this sight Elidure ran to him, and after many sincere embraces, conveyed him to the city of Alclud, and hid him in his own chamber ; where, feigning himself sick, he summoned all his peers, and admitting them one by one, as if his weakness could not endure the disturbance of more, he caused them, willing or unwilling, to swear allegiance to Archigallo, whom he presently conducted to York, and taking the crown from his own brows, placed it upon the head of his brother, who henceforth became a truly converted man, and ruled worthily many years. Thus, says my author, that love of a crown, for which thousands of nearest blood have destroyed each other, was, in respect of brotherly dearness, esteemed by Elidure but as a contemptible thing.

F.—Really, to many persons this will appear the most incredible part of the history.

A.—Elidure, on the death of Archigallo, resumed the government ; but his two younger brothers conspiring against him, he was defeated and imprisoned, and they divide the kingdom ; but Elidure surviving both, after many years' confinement, was again placed upon the throne, and died regretted in a good old age.

P.—Elidure seems to be the only instance of a gentle disposition throughout the narrative.

A.—After these five sons of Morindus, a son or more

of each wielded the sceptre: the last was Paridure, son of Elidure; he left a long descent of twenty kings, whose names only, without the memory of a single action, are registered, and which I will not weary your ears by repeating.

F.—A succession of a score of kings that either did nothing, or lived in ages that wrote nothing, indicates that the author was growing weary of a tedious tale.

A.—After these twenty kingly ciphers reigned Ble-gabredus, who is recorded to have excelled in music; and to confirm the truth of your observation, he was followed by nine kings of a similar nothingness with the twenty preceding; the last of whom, Cliguellius, was the father of Heli, which latter monarch ruled forty years, and gave his name to the Isle of Ely; he left three sons, Lud, Cassibelan, and Nennius.

P.—Light at length begins to dawn; the second of these is the prince who opposed the invasion of Julius Caesar.

A.—King Lud too may have been a real personage; though it should be doubtful whether he enlarged and walled Trinevantum, kept his court there, and called it Lud's-town, or London, and was buried by the gate which thenceforth was named Ludgate. He is said to have been successful in war, and in peace a jolly feaster. He left two sons to the care of their uncle Cassibelan, who assumed the government of the whole kingdom, but who nevertheless conferred upon Androgeus, the elder, the county of Kent, with London; and upon Tenantius, the younger, the county of Cornwall; reserving to himself a paramount authority over them both, as well as over the rest of the petty chiefs or princes amongst whom Britain was divided at the arrival of Caesar.

P.—How much faith would you wish me to repose in these strange traditions?

A.—We may say as did an old divine, “*In apocryphis non omnia esse apocrypha*;” for though the story as a whole must undoubtedly be considered as fictitious, yet it is very possible that some of the circumstances which it relates were founded on fact. The first appearance of the *British History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth excited severe animadversion; but it is curious to observe the strong hold that it took upon the English nation for many ages. Edward the First, when endeavouring to establish his claim of subjection from Scotland, adduces, in a letter to the Pope still extant,^a the whole history of the arrival of Brutus, as a serious proof of the direct and superior dominion of England. The greater part of the old chroniclers and historians, down to the end of the seventeenth century, seldom trouble their readers with any doubt respecting the authenticity of the story. Our poet Spenser^b has given a poetical calendar of these imaginary monarchs; and in the works of Taylor, the Water Poet, may be seen their portraits, with a short character of each in verse: and though now for more than a century the narration has been so generally laid aside as to be nearly forgotten, yet I cannot but think any history of England, without an explanation of this, which may be termed its fabulous part, would be as incomplete as the first Roman Decade without the amours of Mars and Rhea, or the wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus.

F.—Nor can it indeed be properly understood; for as we have seen, allusions have been made to the events thus recorded, not only in state papers, but even in acts of Parliament; and, what is not a little curious, a great

^a Rymer, tom. 2.

^b Faery Queene, b. 2, c. 10.

lawyer, Sir John Fortescue,^a who had filled the office of Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench, absolutely derives the limitations of the English monarchy from the conditions agreed on between Brutus and his Trojan companions.

A.—It may amuse you to hear the dissimilar opinions of two celebrated men on this subject, Sir William Temple and Milton: the statesman^b calls the story at once “a tale forged at pleasure by the wit or folly of its authors.” The poet evidently betrays a hankering in its favour.^c “To suppose,” says he, “those old and inborn names of successive kings never any to have been real persons, or done in their lives at least some part of what hath been so long remembered, cannot be thought, without too strict an incredulity;” and he adds, “I leave the story to the judgment of my reader; neither do I oblige the belief of other person, nor over-hastily subscribe my own.”

^a The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy.

^b Introduction to the Hist. of England.

^c Hist. of Britain, book i.

DISSERTATION II.

Dover Castle.**THE ROMANS.**

F.—FROM this lofty site how various and magnificent is the prospect! the bold shore, the town of Dover stretched at our feet, the expanse of ocean with its ever-beating waters, and the distant cliffs of Calais, recalling a thousand historical traits, conspire to fill the mind with a delightful and elevating sensation.

A.—Nor is the castle itself the least interesting object; its large extent, its antiquity, its commanding situation, its various styles of architecture, attract alike the eye of the antiquary and the lover of the picturesque.

F.—The modern improvements, if such they can be called, I must confess interest me the least; nor should I suppose them to be of any real utility to the castle as a place of defence, which since the invention of artillery could never be tenable, being commanded by the adjacent heights.

A.—This embattled gateway, venerable in its decay, seems to be of Norman origin; but let us pass the consideration of the whole structure as a specimen of the architecture of the middle ages, in carrying our attention to these remains of much greater antiquity.

P.—The larger ruin before us was once evidently a church, but the purpose of the nearly adjoining tower baffles my conjecture.

A.—It well deserves your particular notice, as being perhaps the only undoubted specimen of a Roman building now in Britain; the other remaining works of those all-conquering people being little more than the mutilated traces of a camp, the fragments of a wall, or a tessellated pavement.

P.—The exterior form of the tower, I observe, is octagonal, and the upper part contracted in its dimensions; within, it seems perfectly square.

A.—Its height is forty feet, but it is supposed to have been originally sixty, and to have served as a pharos or watch-tower, for which its situation was admirably adapted; its foundations, it seems, notwithstanding the chalky soil, are in a bed of clay, which has been observed of other Roman buildings. Its materials are constructed in the usual Roman manner; the walls being built with layers of long, thin, irregular red bricks, between which are courses of a sort of spar cut into blocks, which, if British, must have been fetched from the more northern counties; and as the Romans had no extensive fleet in Britain till the days of Agricola, its date must be subsequent to that period.

F.—I should rather suspect that the materials were brought from the opposite coast of Gaul, as they appear to be of similar quality with the celebrated Caen stone. The usual appellation of Julius Caesar's Tower must necessarily be erroneous, that celebrated conqueror never having been on this spot.

A.—The doorway of the tower has a regular semicircular arch of the same deep-coloured bricks; and though the windows have been defaced by alter-

ations, and the walls obscured by a coat of plaister, in times comparatively modern, yet, upon the whole, the structure remains unequalled as a Roman relic in this kingdom.

P.—Are the remains of the church of equal antiquity?

A.—By no means, though the bricks worked indiscriminately into the walls are undoubtedly Roman, yet they seem to have been taken from some dilapidated building, probably by the Saxons.

F.—Dover, from its situation as it regards the neighbouring continent, must always have been of the highest importance, and consequently we may conclude, that it has ever been a military station since the Island of Britain was inhabited. With what anxiety we may suppose the ancient Britons to have beheld from these heights the Roman fleet approaching with a hostile intention.

A.—Cæsar states, that his original desire of invading Britain was caused by the assistance which its inhabitants were accustomed to afford the Gauls in their wars against him.^a In the year 55, before the Christian era, though the summer was nearly expired, he resolved to explore, at least, even if the season did not allow him sufficient time to conquer, the country: with this intention he sailed from Gaul with two Roman legions, supposed to consist of about twelve thousand men, in eighty ships, leaving his cavalry to follow. As the Romans approached these cliffs on which we stand, Cæsar beheld them covered with enemies, whose brandished weapons from that height he judged it prudent to avoid; and proceeded eight miles further north, to a flat and open shore,

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 4. cap. 20.

which consequently must have been somewhere about where now stands the town of Deal.

P.—And did he there land without opposition?

A.—By no means; the Britons discovering his intention, sent off their horse, and prepared to follow with all their force to prevent his disembarkation, which, however, he at length effected with much difficulty, the ships being too large to approach the beach, and the Roman soldiers, heavily armed, afraid to leap into the deep water. In this dilemma, the Britons, now standing on the shore and now advancing a small distance into the sea, attacked the invaders with darts and spears, and excited the utmost alarm and confusion.

P.—The great commander had then sufficient scope for his genius in extricating himself from this embarrassment.

A.—With his usual vigilance Cæsar ordered some lighter vessels to be laid lengthwise nearer the shore; and by this measure he was enabled to assail the barbarians, as he proudly terms them, with missiles propelled from the formidable engines of Roman warfare: at length the eagle-bearer of the tenth legion, exhorting his companions, leaped into the sea, and the soldiers at once following, a sharp conflict ensued, which ended in the flight of the Britons, whom Cæsar was not able to pursue, as his cavalry did not arrive; the ships in which they were embarked, being carried down, what we now term the Channel, by an adverse wind: he calls this the only circumstance wanting to his good fortune.

P.—But such a battle was not the conquest of Britain.

A.—Cæsar proceeding a short distance from the

shore, fortified a camp, as it is conjectured, on Barham Downs, and thither the Britons sent legates with some terms of submission: but on the fourth day after his landing, a storm, combining with a high tide, destroyed a large part of the fleet.

F.—This accident, which happened at the full of the moon, has given an occasion of remarking, that the doctrine of lunar influence on the tide was not unknown to the ancients; as Cæsar observes, that the full moon was wont to effect a great flow of the ocean.^a

A.—As soon as the Britons understood the disaster, they became desirous of retracting their concessions, and entered into secret measures for attacking the Roman camp. The seventh legion being sent out to forage, was surrounded, and had not Cæsar flown to its assistance, having been apprised by the sentinels, who had observed an unusual dust, the whole army would have been exposed to the utmost danger of extermination.

P.—With what weapons were so rude a people, as the Britons are represented to be at this period, able to contend against the Roman power in its highest state of discipline, and under its most renowned captain?

A.—You are to recollect that, in this first invasion, Cæsar was without cavalry: the Britons wore no armour, but went naked into battle with their skins discoloured with woad, to appear terrific to their enemies; they used a short spear and target, with a sword appended to their side: but on this occasion, the effect of their war chariots drew from Cæsar the highest encomium: he represents them as uniting the activity of horse with the stability of foot. So dexterous were the Britons in their management, that on the brink of

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 4. cap. 29.

a precipice and in the rapidity of a descent they guided these vehicles with as much security as on a level plain.^a

P.—Did the Britons follow up the advantage of their late exploit?

A.—They collected in great numbers, and Cæsar for several days was evidently afraid to attack them, as he lay quiet in his camp, pretending to be prevented by continual tempests; at length in an irregular skirmish, with about thirty horse that he had collected, he devastated the neighbourhood with considerable severity. The Britons again asking peace, Cæsar demanded certain hostages which should follow him into Gaul; and judging it a fit time to depart, his fleet being much weakened, and the autumnal equinox approaching, he re-embarked, and with his entire army reached the continent in safety.^b

F.—The result of this invasion might more justly be entitled a fortunate escape than a brilliant conquest.

A.—It was certainly so esteemed by the enemies of Cæsar at Rome. There is a remarkable line in Lucan's *Pharsalia* to this purpose:

“Territa quæsitis ostendit terga Britannis.”—B. 2. v. 572.

“Does he boast

“His flight from Britain's new discovered coast.”—Rowe.

But the ambition of this conqueror would not rest content with so dubious a triumph: the next spring, complaining that the Britons had not fulfilled their engagements in sending hostages, indeed only two cities or states had so complied, he prepared to punish their neglect; and collecting a large army in Gaul, of five legions and two thousand horse,^c which he commanded

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 4. cap. 35.

^b Lib. 4. cap. 36.

^c Lib. 5. cap. 2.

to rendezvous "ad Portum Itium," supposed to be Boulogne, he thence passed the sea and landed nearly in the same place as in his former expedition, without seeing an enemy; the Britons being alarmed at the extent of his preparations, his fleet consisting of not less than eight hundred ships of various burden.

P.—The conflict was too unequal.

A.—Cæsar having disembarked, fortified a camp immediately on the shore; and then proceeding with his army about twelve miles, he beheld the Britons posted on the river Stour, but the situation is not exactly ascertained: they attacked him with briskness, but were repulsed, and compelled to take refuge in the woods, and in a neighbouring place of strength, thought to be Canterbury. The next day brought intelligence that the fleet had suffered severely from a storm during the preceeding night, which induced Cæsar to return to the coast, where he gave orders to have the remaining ships dragged up out of the sea, and secured within the fortified boundary of the camp. After a detention of ten days, he proceeded again with his army to seek the dominions of Cassivelaunus, or Cassibelan, to whose authority the Britons had entrusted their common safety.

P.—Why should not Cæsar have proceeded up the Thames and secured the metropolis?

A.—It is somewhat doubtful whether London then existed; and if it did, it was the chief town of the Trinobantes, who were not the subjects of Cassibelan, whose kingdom seems to have consisted of the modern counties of Hertford, Bedford, and Buckingham. Cæsar, after penetrating through the country and fighting in many severe skirmishes, at length reached the Thames, where it was fordable, near the present village of Wal-

ton, in Surrey; here he found the Britons on the opposite side in vast numbers, prepared to dispute his passage, the further bank and middle of the river being defended by sharp stakes fixed under the stream; notwithstanding which, his cavalry plunging into the river, were followed by the foot, the water reaching to their shoulders. The Britons, incapable of sustaining this impetus of the Roman legions, at once dispersed.^a

F.—The place is still commemorated by the name of Coway Stakes. A very few years since, one of these supposed ancient stakes was taken from the river, black as jet, and so hard as to turn an axe.^b

A.—Cassibelan, despairing to contend directly with Cæsar, dismissed his army, except about four thousand chariots, with which he continued to annoy his enemy. At this period the Trinobantes sent legates to Cæsar, entreating that he would secure their kingdom to the youth Mandubratius, then in his camp, whose father, Tenuantius, had been killed by Cassibelan; which Cæsar readily granting, obtained hostages and supplies. Some other tribes surrendering themselves also, he prepared to attack the chief station of Cassibelan, near the modern town of St. Alban's, a place strong both by nature and art, consisting of a few straggling villages, surrounded by a ditch and rampart, and containing many men and much cattle. After a short defence it was taken possession of by the Romans.^c

P.—The Britons appear not to have tamely yielded, but boldly to have disputed the ground inch by inch.

A.—Cassibelan was not only a brave but a politic warrior. At this juncture he directed four chiefs of Kent, (Cæsar calls them kings,) to attack the Roman

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 5. cap. 18.

^b See also Archæol. vol. i. p. 190.

^c De Bel. Gal. lib. 5. cap. 21.

camp on the shore, which they immediately attempted, but were repulsed; had they succeeded Cæsar's situation would have been extremely critical. Cassibelan, on learning the failure of this design, made advances for peace, which it would seem Cæsar was much disposed to grant, demanding only certain hostages, an annual tribute, and the security of his ally Mandubratius.

P.—And did so mighty an expedition terminate with no greater success?

A.—Such was the barren result, and nothing more. Cæsar alleging the same causes for his departure as in the former year, immediately returned to Gaul, and, with his usual fortune, lost not a single soldier by the perils of the ocean.^a

F.—The resistance of the Britons was much more spirited and pertinacious than is usually apprehended; indeed I believe it is no uncommon error to imagine that Cæsar's "Thrasonical brag," *veni vidi vici*, was occasioned by his conquest of Britain, instead of his victory over Pharnaces.

A.—Tacitus observes, that Cæsar had shewn Britain to posterity rather than subdued it.^b This able soldier no doubt acted with his wonted wisdom and courage in these expeditions; but he might conclude that no conquests which he could make would repay the difficulty and expense of maintaining them; and indeed the necessity of attending to his ambitious schemes at home effectually prevented any further personal intercourse. That the Roman authority was merely nominal, may be inferred from the tribute never having been paid, and that the Britons continued unmolested for a whole century afterwards.

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 5, cap. 23.

^b Agricolæ Vita.

F.—During this interval, we may truly say, *hiatus valde deflendus*; for though Britain is often alluded to by the classics of the Augustan age, yet scarcely a single trace of its authentic history is to be found in their pages.

A.—What is more strange, even Geoffrey of Monmouth fails on this occasion; what he says contains little to the purpose: from him it would appear, that Tenantius, the younger son of King Lud, succeeded to his uncle Cassibelan; he was wise and fortunate, and left the kingdom to his son Cunobeline, the Cymbeline of Shakspeare. This monarch was certainly an authentic personage, being mentioned by the ancient historians, Suetonius^a and Dion.^b

F.—A presumption may also be found in the existence of certain coins not of very rare occurrence, attributed to Cunobeline. At the first glance we should feel inclined to suspect that British relics of so very ancient a date must necessarily be spurious; but from the general testimony of men well qualified to judge, such as Sir Robert Cotton, Camden, and Speed, I confess my doubts are overcome.^c These coins are of gold, silver, and brass; some are impressed with the bust of Cunobeline, and with the first three or five letters of his name; the reverse has various devices.

A.—The substance of these coins being chiefly the precious metals, was calculated to raise a doubt, as Cæsar^d expressly states the British money to have been either of brass or iron.

F.—A controversy has arisen as to the meaning of the word Tascio, which appears frequently on the

^a Caligula, c. 44.

^b Lib. 60, c. 20.

^c Essay on the Coins of Cunobeline, by Samuel Pegge.

^d De Bel. Gal. lib. 5, c. 12.

reverse of these coins: some have been disposed to think that it meant tribute-money, imposed by the *Tag*, or prince; but this opinion is hardly feasible, as the Britons did not pay tribute, and in no country was money ever expressly coined for such a purpose. One piece with this inscription exhibits the figure of an operative minter at his work, and the word may possibly be the name of Cunobeline's mint-master; other pieces have the abbreviation 'Cam. Camal.,' for Camalodunum, where it is supposed they were executed, probably by Roman artists. Sir John Pettus^a ridiculously derives the word coin from these pieces of Coynobeline, who first coined money in Britain.

A.—From the frequent mention of Britain by the classics, we may conclude that after Cæsar's invasion a considerable intercourse took place between this country and Rome. Geoffrey's Chronicle reports that Cunobeline was brought up at Rome by Augustus;^b he reigned long and prosperously, and divided his kingdom at his death between his sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, who were kings in Britain at the time of the next invasion by the Romans under Claudius Cæsar.

P.—What motive induced the Romans to renew their conquest?

A.—That which to them ever afforded a pretext and justification, ambition; but the immediate cause was the discord which prevailed amongst the British themselves, with whose chiefs or princes, dissension might be called an endemic disease: one of these, Bericus^c by name, appeared at Rome and suggested the probability of a successful attack. The Emperor Claudius embracing at once the opportunity, entrusted to Aulus

^d Fodina Regales, History of Mines, &c. in England.

^b Gal. Mon. lib. 4, c. 11.

^c Dion, lib. 60, c. 19.

Plautius four legions, with some German auxiliaries, whose habits of warfare were peculiarly adapted for this service. That able general, assisted by Vespasian, afterwards emperor, and his brother Sabinus, effected a prosperous landing, and overran the south-east parts of Britain, though not without encountering a severe opposition; when, sending for the Emperor, whom Plautius was desirous of flattering with an excuse for a triumph at Rome, he took possession of Camalodunum, the chief town of Caractacus, the British king, A. D. 43.

F.—Whether Camalodunum were Malden or Colchester, has been much disputed; the pretensions of the former are the resemblance of its name, and its vicinity to the estuary mentioned by Tacitus;^a the advocates for the latter plead its superior situation, its accumulation of Roman remains, and the great number of ancient coins there discovered. But in the Itinerary of Antoninus a plain distinction between the two stations, Colonia and Camalodunum, appears, and therefore I give my suffrage for Malden; which opinion, after some struggle, seems now to be commonly admitted.

P.—I thought you said that Guiderius and Arviragus, the sons of Cunobeline, at the time of this invasion, governed Britain.

A.—These names are given in the Monmouth Chronicle, and are conjectured to mean the same persons as Togodumnus and Caractacus; the first of whom fell in battle against Plautius, sustaining the freedom of his country; the latter became worthy to have his deeds recorded in the immortal page of Tacitus.

F.—Having then this celebrated writer for our guide, it is really time to take leave of Geoffrey of Monmouth,

^a Annal. lib. 14.

with his many fables and fooleries; such romancers, being fit only to be consulted in the total absence of other authority, become worse than useless when they disturb the steady light of history by their strange combination of unknown names with incredible facts.

A.—The Romans established their first colony at Camalodunum, but were far from feeling themselves secure in Britain, Caractacus continuing to harass them with repeated attacks for several years; but at length, when leading the Silures, a warlike people dwelling on the banks of the Severn, he was defeated by Ostorius Scapula, the successor of Plautius, in a great battle near the river Teme in Shropshire, when his wife and children were taken prisoners, and shortly after his brothers surrendered. Caractacus seeking protection from Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes, a tribe inhabiting the now northern counties of England, was basely betrayed and delivered up by her in chains to the Romans, A. D. 51.^a

P.—This event has been long impressed upon my memory, Caractacus with his family, led in triumph through the streets of Rome, having afforded a subject on which many painters have exercised their pencil.

F.—It has also afforded the materials of a picturesque description in the pages of the most picturesque of historians.

A.—The result has always been felt with pleasure: Caractacus, boldly representing to Claudius that the imperial dignity would derive more glory from clemency than severity, was pardoned and released. It is matter of regret that the subsequent history of this undaunted defender of his country should remain unknown; it is said that he expressed his surprise that the Romans,

^a Tacitus, *Annal.* lib. 12.

who possessed such magnificent palaces at home, should fight for the hovels of Britain.

P.—Yet he could have been no stranger to the insatiable desires of ambition.

A.—The treacherous Cartismandua continued in alliance with the Romans; but deserting her husband, Venutius, for Vellocatus, her armour-bearer, she so much incensed her subjects that they drove her from the throne;^a when seeking protection from her new allies, she passed with them the remainder of a degraded life. The Brigantes uniting with the Silures, continued their resistance with so much pertinacity as to cause the death of Ostorius, from pure fatigue and vexation; nor did the Romans make further impression under his two immediate successors: but in the reign of Nero, Suetonius Paulinus, a soldier of high reputation, was entrusted with the command; and being ambitious of distinguishing himself by some striking action, he resolved to attack the Isle of Mona, now Anglesey, the chief seat of druidical superstition, and often affording protection to the baffled forces of the Britons.^b

P.—Is not Mona sometimes thought to be the Isle of Man?

A.—In Cæsar's description, Mona,^c placed in the ocean half-way between Britain and Ireland, is undoubtedly that island; but the Mona of Tacitus is Anglesey, which is separated from Britain by the straight called the Menai, to pass which the Roman foot were now embarked in flat-bottomed boats, and the horse swam through the deeper or forded the more shallow part of the water. On the shore women intermingled with the warriors, and running about like furies,

^a Tacit. Hist. lib. 5.

^b Tacit. Agric. Vita.

^c De Bel. Gal. lib. 5, c. 15.

with dishevelled hair and burning torches, struck a momentary terror, to which the imprecations of the Druids did not a little contribute; but Suetonius exhorting his soldiers to despise such fanaticism, impelled them to the attack, drove the Britons from the field, destroyed the consecrated groves and altars, and burned the Druids in the same fire which they had prepared for their enemies, A. D. 59.^a

P.—One cannot but wish that, in this career of success, the Romans had a juster cause.

A.—They had not much leisure to exult in their recent conquest; an extensive insurrection now broke out through the larger part of Britain, occasioned by repeated acts of cruelty and avarice. Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, a people inhabiting the modern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge, expecting to secure protection to his posterity, appointed Nero co-heir with his two daughters; but the Romans under this pretence seized the kingdom, and treated it as a conquered country. Boadicea, the royal widow, resisting this oppression, was scourged and her daughters violated. The Iceni judging the absence of the general to be a fit opportunity of revenge, flew to arms, and at once sacked and destroyed Camalodunum, the new Roman colony. Suetonius, on learning this defection, with great celerity and boldness traversed the country, and reached London, at that time beginning to rise to commercial opulence; but finding it untenable, he was compelled to resign it, as well as Verulam, to the power of the victorious Iceni.

F.—These barbarians inflicted upon the defenceless inhabitants every species of ignominy and suffering. Who can hear of the indiscriminate destruction of

^a Tacit. Annal. lib. 14.

seventy thousand persons,^a of various ages and of both sexes, without horror?

A.—Suetonius found it necessary no longer to defer his attack, which the Britons, vainly confiding in their superior numbers, prepared to receive with alacrity; and placing their wives in waggons on the outskirts of their camp, to be the witnesses of their victory, they repaired to the field of battle, supposed to be near the modern town of Epping.^b Boadicea with her daughters, borne in a chariot, went through the ranks stimulating the courage of the British soldiers. The Greek historian, Dion,^c represents her as declaiming to them in flowing robes with a spear in her hand; and after a long circumlocution, turning loose amongst them, for a fortunate omen, a hare which had been concealed in her bosom, she concluded her address with a prayer to Andate, the British goddess, who indeed afforded her no protection; for Suetonius, with his army, consisting of about ten thousand men, having judiciously chosen a position in which his wings could not be flanked, sustained patiently the first assault, when the legion at length breaking out in the form of a wedge, utterly overthrew and defeated the undisciplined Britons; escape being precluded by the impediments with which they were surrounded. Eighty thousand slain on the field, with the loss only of four hundred Romans, attest a general route rather than an equal engagement.^d

P.—And what befel the unfortunate Boadicea?

A.—Tacitus relates that she put an end to her life by poison; Dion, that she died from vexation. She is described as a woman of lofty stature, with a fierce countenance; her hair was bright, and hanging down to her waist: her courage deserved a better fate: of

^a Tacit. Annal. lib. 14.

^b Morant, Hist. of Essex.

^c Lib. 62, c. 6.

^d Tacit. Annal. lib. 14.

her cruelty we must not judge by the example of more polished times; of her incompetency to contend with the discipline of the Roman legion, the fatal result made too evident.

P.—Did this dreadful discomfiture at once reduce the Britons to obedience?

A.—They declined to hazard any pitched battles, but continued to harass the Romans by a predatory warfare. Suetonius was speedily recalled from his province, where, by suffering and inflicting so many severities, his temper was judged unlikely to conciliate the angry and alarmed minds of the inhabitants; and the government devolved successively for short periods on two or three commanders of reputation, till at length, in the reign of Vespasian, it was given to Agricola,^a under whom a more regular plan of reducing the island and rendering it useful to its conquerors was completed.

F.—This we may suppose consisted in ruling with equity and introducing the arts of civilized life.

A.—Agricola was undoubtedly a man of merit, and having his actions related by his son-in-law, Tacitus, they appear in the fairest light. By his judicious management tribe after tribe submitted, till the whole south of Britain assumed the form of a Roman province; the inhabitants gradually acquiring a taste for the language and manners, the letters and science, of their conquerors.

P.—Agricola was perhaps less ambitious of military fame than his predecessors.

A.—He deserved at least as large a share; for turning his arms to the north, he penetrated into regions and conquered nations before unknown. This general was remarkable for the judgment with which

^a Tacit. Agric. Vita.

he fortified proper places of defence; and he fixed a chain of forts between the rivers Clyde and Forth, to restrain the incursions of the barbarous inhabitants of the mountains; notwithstanding which, Galgacus, a Caledonian chief, attacked him with an army of thirty thousand men, but suffered a total defeat, A. D. 85. This seems to have been the last great battle which the Britons ventured in defence of their independence. The fleet of Agricola discovered the Orcades, or the Orkney islands, before unknown to the Romans, and first ascertained with certainty that Britain itself was an island.^a

P.—That its early affairs should have been described by two such writers as Cæsar and Tacitus is singularly gratifying.

A.—Whether from the circumstance of its history being henceforth to be gleaned out of inferior authors, or from its own insignificance, certain it is, that from this period the transactions of the Romans in Britain are utterly without interest. After the conquests of Agricola an absolute chasm takes place till the reign of Adrian, who in his progress through his vast dominions visited this island,^b (A. D. 122;) and finding the incursions of the Caledonians still troublesome, he erected his celebrated wall, extending from the mouth of the Tyne to Solway Firth: it seems to have been formed by a mound of turf six feet in height, with a ditch beyond. About twenty years after, under the reign of Antoninus Pius, it was thought that a more northerly defence was required; and a new wall, partly of stone, was erected by the Proprætor Lollius Urbicus,^c between the friths of Clyde and Forth, upon the line it is supposed of Agricola's forts. The Caledonians still

^a Agric. Vita.

^b Spartian, Vit. Adrian, c. 11.

^c Capitolinus, c. 5.

continuing their incursions, the Emperor Severus, taking with him his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, arrived in Britain (207), and after much perseverance, with difficulty chastised these northern invaders.^a

P.—Can we suppose that it was in this expedition that the Romans were opposed by Fingal, who is said by Ossian to have obtained a victory on the banks of the Carun, in which the son of the king of the world, Caracul, “fled from his arms along the fields of his pride?”

A.—That “Fingal fought, or Ossian sung,” at least in this age, is more than doubtful; as, if these chieftains ever lived at all, it was half a century later. Could we indulge so pleasing an illusion as their existence, in the contrast of situation and manners, we should see little to the advantage of those who esteemed themselves the more civilized people.

P.—But on what principle are we to account for the historical allusions in the work of Ossian, still believed as genuine by the partizans of Celtic antiquity?

A.—It is somewhat difficult to explain the subject; in the early histories of Ireland,^b though commonly deemed fabulous, it is certain that such names as Fionn, the son of Cumhall, *Fingal*, a redoubted warrior, (A. D. 279); and Osgur, *Oscar*, the son of Oisin, *Ossian*, are undoubtedly to be found. During the third century, an irruption of a tribe of the Irish took place, which ended in their establishment in the Western Highlands of Scotland. An intercourse between the two countries thus continuing, the traditional fame of these heroes was preserved in both regions; but by a sort of anachronism, not uncommon in ballad lore, it has been mixed up and confounded with the deeds of various other warriors of much later ages.

^a Dion, lib. 76. Herodian, lib. 5.

^b Keating, O’Flaherty Ogygia.

P.—The controversy then is not whether the names of Fingal and Ossian occur in Erse or Irish oral poetry, that being granted; but whether Macpherson has not raised a structure entirely his own upon these slender foundations?

A.—Exactly so: that writer seems to have taken a few prevailing names still floating in tradition, and to have combined them so artfully with every existing scrap of Gaelic oral poetry, of whatever date or subject, that it became impossible for any Gael to avoid recognising many events and even phrases which had been familiar to his ear from infancy; consequently inducing a conclusion that the poems could not be other than an ancient and genuine composition: and what more flattering to national vanity than the supposition that Caledonia, in so early a period as the third century, had made those advances in civilization which these compositions imply?

P.—Dr. Johnson, in controverting the authority of Fingal, in which poem Macpherson has inserted these scraps of ancient ballads, has elucidated the subject by saying that he would undertake to write an epic poem on the story of Robin Hood; and half England, to whom the names and places were familiar, would believe and declare that they had been acquainted with the work from their earliest years.

F.—Macpherson, it is said, at last confessed his ingenuity, and that he was impelled to the attempt by the neglect of his poem, “The Highlander.” It is not a little curious to observe the coincidence in the labours of Macpherson and Chatterton; the avowed works of each being equally neglected, and the fictitious equally exciting universal attention.

A.—Whatever may be the merit of these once

popular productions, and, abating the eternal repetition of the same images and sentiments, I am not disposed to deny them a considerable portion, there is certainly not the slightest foundation for supposing that even a single sentence, much less a whole poem, ever proceeded from the lips or pen of such a bard as Ossian; besides, the idea of oral poetry continuing through the long space of fifteen centuries is preposterous: the real Celtic style too, of whatever date, is totally different from these pretended ancient compositions; the sentiment, tenderness, and description in which partake too powerfully of the modern school.—The Emperor Severus, after tranquilizing Britain, and erecting a new and loftier wall,^a constructed with stone, a few feet to the north of Adrian's former rampart, expired after a long illness at York (211.)

P.—Of this laborious structure do any remains ascertain the exact site?

A.—The wall of Severus was perhaps the greatest military work ever erected by the Romans in any country; its length was sixty-eight miles, its height being twelve feet and its breadth eight; it was carried on, over steep hills and through deep valleys, without interruption; it had eighteen stations or large forts, which became the nucleus of as many towns; there were eighty-one castles, sixty-six feet square, the wall forming their northern side, each seven furlongs apart; and three hundred and twenty-four watch-towers, or turrets, twelve feet square. Of the speaking brazen pipes, which were said to communicate sounds from sea to sea, we will say nothing, as they must have proceeded from the same manufactory which produced Friar Bacon's famous head. Beyond the whole was a ditch thirty-six feet wide and fifteen deep. Of all this magnificence but

^a Spartian, c. 12.

few vestiges remain, the wall becoming the common quarry out of which the towns and villages of the neighbourhood have been constructed.

P.—But the trench could not be so appropriated.

A.—And consequently where cultivation has not encroached, its whole direction is easily to be perceived, as is indeed a large part of Adrian's ditch and bank; upon the foundation of the wall for a considerable length is now a high road.

F.—The last author who has described these remains from ocular inspection was the late respectable Hutton,^a of Birmingham, who in the year 1801, at the age of seventy-eight, traversed on foot the whole length of the wall and back, for the sole purpose of contemplating its evanescent ruins.

A.—Connected also with this defence there were on the southern side two military ways, paved with square stones, the traces of which are now sufficiently evident.

P.—The subject of the Roman roads, so frequently alluded to in topographical descriptions, has always puzzled my understanding to comprehend.

A.—It has puzzled many other persons. As the Romans extended their conquests, an easy communication between each station became desirable; this was the origin of military ways in Britain, which probably were first constructed by Agricola.

P.—But allusion to the principal of these roads is perpetually occurring under the more modern names of the Fosse, Watling-street, Erming-street, and Ikenild-street.

A.—These four highways are mentioned, in the laws attributed to Edward the Confessor,^b as possessing

^a History of the Roman Wall.

^b Wilkins, c. 12.

regulations peculiar to themselves; and two of them are described as running lengthwise, and two across the kingdom. It would be erroneous to suppose that the Romans constructed only these four, as even the map of the Itinerary of Antoninus, of the date of the second century, lays down many others, which no doubt were afterwards increased. The site of the four ways is a matter of much uncertainty: the Fosse, so called because in some places it was never perfected, but left like a ditch, is the least disputed; it ran from Totness in Devon, through Bath, Cirencester, Leicester, to Lincoln; thence in a straight line to the Humber: this last portion still exhibits more appearances of a Roman origin than any other road in the kingdom. The way then proceeded to Berwick, and thence, says Selden,^a to Caithness, the northern extremity of Scotland; but that is scarcely credible.

P.—As the Romans seemed always to build for eternity, in what manner were these military ways constructed?

A.—They began such works by making deep excavations, on each side of which they erected walls, often forming a parapet above the road; the space between was filled with layers of different materials, above which they placed the hardest stones, fastened together by an intermediate cement. The remains of such pavements are in many places discoverable in Britain: Watling-street, so called from Vitellianus, in British Gwethelin, its supposed director, extended from Dover to London in nearly the line of the present road; it has left its name, though no other traces, in the metropolis.

F.—Unless it be London Stone, which probably is

^a Notes to Drayton's Polyolbion, Song 16.

a Roman relic, and might be the mark whence the miles were originally measured from that city.^a

A.—Watling-street proceeded from London to Dunstable, crossed the Fosse at High Cross, near Leicester, and was continued to Chester; some authorities suppose that it thence crossed over the country to York, thence to Carlisle, and so entered Scotland.

P.—But we have still Erming-street and Ikenild-street unexplained.

A.—And I doubt they will ever remain so, the confusion being inextricable: the former, deriving its name from Hermes, or Mercury, the president of highways, is represented to have run in a northerly direction, beginning at Arundel, passing through Lewes, Stane-street, Streatham, to Stanegate, Lambeth; thence by Hertford, Huntingdon, to Lincoln; it then crossed the Trent to York, and ended at Tynemouth: but such is the discrepancy of authors, that these northern portions^b of the way are appropriated by some to the Fosse,^c and by others to the Watling-street. To add to the confusion, an old writer^d describes this Erming-street as a road leading from St. David's, in Wales, to Southampton. "Amidst such disagreement," says the learned Selden, "I determine nothing;" an example which I think highly prudent to follow. The Ikenild-street derived its name from the Iceni; its direction is as uncertain as the rest: one authority states it to have proceeded from Caister, near Norwich, through Colchester, to London, and thence by Bath to Marlborough; another gives it at first a more westerly direction, from Caister, through Cambridgeshire, to Dunstable, and thence to Southampton. While, to clinch the whole, a third writer

^a Maitland, *Hist. of London*, p. 1048.

^b Gale in Leland, vol. 6.

^c Horsley, *Britannia Romana*.

^d Lambarde, *Kent*.

describes the Ikenild-street as beginning at Southampton, running through the centre of the kingdom, and ending at the mouth of the Tyne.

P.—Street being a Saxon word evidently derived from the Latin *stratum*, we are warranted to conclude that towns designated by such names as Stratford, Stratten, Stratfield, occurring so very frequently in the topography of England, lay in the direction of these military roads.

A.—In the direction of some Roman road, without doubt; but it follows not that they were connected with these four principal highways. The subject is not very interesting, even if accuracy could be attained; but as the names and course of these works are differently reported, our knowledge must be chiefly conjectural: we may conclude that they were of eminent utility, and tended much to civilize the inhabitants of Britain. After the death of Severus (211,) another chasm occurs of near seventy years in our history. During the reign of the Emperor Probus, an officer, by name Bonosus, assumed the imperial purple; he was a matchless drinker, and, what is somewhat singular, was reputed to be most wise in his cups; but being defeated by the Roman army near Cullen, in Banffshire (282,) he hanged himself; which gave rise to a jest with the soldiers, that there hung a tankard, and not a man.^a

P.—During this long period, did the Britons evince no desire of regaining their ancient independence?

A.—The whole nation, or at least the southern part of it, their youth having been incorporated with the Roman legions, became disarmed, dispirited, and submissive, losing all remembrance of liberty.

^a Vopiscus, Bonosus, c. 2.

F.—About this time we first hear of the Saxons as a maritime and plundering nation;^a a Roman officer of great power being created for the express purpose of defending the east and southern coasts from their depredations; he was first called Count of the Maritime Tract,^b and about a century later, Count of the Saxon Shore.^c

A.—An usurper now appeared in Britain; Carausius, who boldly declared himself Emperor (286,) and maintained his dignity for seven years against all the efforts of his enemies, till he was treacherously murdered by his *friend* Alectus.^d

F.—Carausius is a favourite object of antiquarian curiosity, from the great number and excellence of his medals.

P.—Ossian has made Fingal give battle to this usurper, thus extending the life of his hero to the green old age of a century.

A.—The Cæsar, Constantius Chlorus, held the government for a considerable period; but at length dying at York (306,) his son, Constantine the Great, assumed there the reins of imperial power.

F.—The birth-place of this celebrated Emperor, as well as the condition of his mother, Helena, has been the subject not only of literary but of national disputes. It has been contended, from a legend embellished if not invented by Geoffrey of Monmouth, that Helena was the daughter of Coyle, a sort of prince of Colchester; this has evidently the air of fable, though supported by such respectable antiquaries as Camden and Selden. That Helena was no princess, but a person of obscure condition, is pretty clear from writers who lived near

^a Entropius, lib. 9, c. 21.

^b Ammian, Marcel. b. 28, c. 3.

^c Notitia Imperii.

^d Eumenius, Paneg. 8.

her own time.^a St. Ambrose is very angry that the enemies of Christianity reproached her with being the daughter of an innkeeper;^b and it is probable that her father exercised his calling in some town of the Lesser Asia.

P.—That the birth-place of such a person as Constantine the Great should be unknown, is a little extraordinary.

F.—Our elder antiquaries, from a doubtful application of the words of his Panegyrist Eumenius, *Britannias illic oriendo nobiles fecisti*, have given to this island the honour of producing him; but the passage may as justly be referred to his assumption of the purple as to his birth. A cotemporary^c has assigned the town of Naissus, in Dacia, as the place of Constantine's nativity; and though the integrity of the passage has been questioned, the opinion is sufficiently probable. It is surprising what diligence of research and parade of quotation have been exhibited in this *important* controversy.

A.—The exploits of the founder of Constantinople, however splendid and memorable, are foreign to British story. In the reign of his son Constantius, the Picts and Scots seem to have made their first irruption (360;)^d the beginning of that long series of desultory and ferocious attack, which renders the subsequent history of the Britons little else than a wearisome repetition of scenes of devastation and distress.

P.—Were the Picts and Scots indigenous inhabitants of the north of Britain?

A.—The subject is somewhat obscure, and has been keenly disputed. The Picts are first mentioned by the rhetorician Eumenius, who flourished about the year

^a Eutropius, lib. 6, c. 12.

^c Julius Firmicus de Astrol. lib. 1, c. 4.

^b De Obitu Theodosii.

^d Ammian, Marcel. lib. 20, c. 1.

292, in this phrase, "Caledonians and other Picts;"^a from which they appear to be no other than the former race with a new name: they might be thus called from their continuing the habit of painting the body with various figures long after it had been elsewhere laid aside. According to Claudian,

"Ille leves Mauros, nec falso nomine Pictos
Edomuit."^b

"The agile Moors and painted Picts, a name
Not falsely given, he conquered."

Or perhaps the Celtic word *Pichtich*, signifying a plunderer, gave the appellation, the propriety of which was long felt by the southern British. The earliest notice of the Scoti is in a quotation by St. Jerome,^c from Porphyry, the philosopher, who wrote in 267: *Neque enim Britannia fertilis provincia tyrannorum, et Scotiæ gentes; Moysen prophetasque cognoverant.* The Scotiæ gentes, when thus mentioned, appear to have been seated in Ireland, as may be gathered from various passages in ancient writers, such as the following in Claudian:

"Scotorum cumulos, flevit glacialis Ierne."^d

"Frozen Ierne mourn'd her slaughtered Scots."

F.—But, say some authorities, instead of Ireland being their seat, the Scoti were in all probability a colony of Scythians from Germany; for so were the ancient inhabitants of some parts of that extensive country designated.

A.—With that opinion I cannot at all coincide; as if the Scoti be derived from the Scythæ, why should that name be forgotten for centuries, and revive at this particular period? to say nothing of the Celtic origin of the Scoti, which their language still evinces; besides the name was given as a term of reproach, Scuit sig-

^a Paneg. cap. 7.

^c Contra Pelagianos.

^b Paneg. in III. Consul. Honor. v. 54. ^d Paneg. in IV. Consul. Honor. v. 55.

nifying a wanderer, and was never assumed by the Highlanders, who uniformly call themselves Gaels, and their language Erse; by the latter acknowledging their relationship to Ireland.

F.—Mr. Gibbon has asserted, without sufficient authority, that the Scots and the Picts were the same people, the former inhabiting the mountains, the latter the plains, between whom a perpetual strife existed. But I am more disposed to join in your opinion, that Ireland was the native seat of the Scoti, though how or in what age they first planted themselves in the Green Island may not be ascertainable.

A.—Some have given them a Spanish origin; but it is not improbable that they were originally a branch of the Attacotti, an ancient Caledonian tribe, who were said to be cannibals, and that they settled in Ireland about a century before Christ. What we know with certainty is, that about the end of the third century, these Irish Scoti,^a under their leader Reuda, made an irruption on the north-west coast of Britain, and obtained from the weakness or friendship of the Caledonians a permanent settlement; and at length (indeed it required some centuries first,) they attained so marked a superiority as to give the name of Scotland to a large division of the island.

F.—It is curious to observe that the Scots and Picts, having once tasted the sweets of plunder, continued their depredations upon their southern neighbours for many centuries, and long after their own manners had been softened by some degree of civilization.

A.—From the neglect of the Romans after the death of Constantine to the affairs of Britain, the province was overrun by these hostile tribes from the north, and by

^a Bede, lib. 1, c. 1.

the Saxons from their numerous vessels in the east and south. To disperse the invaders,^a Theodosius, father of the great Emperor of that name, arrived with a powerful force, and soon driving the Picts and Scots beyond the wall, completely restored security and peace to Britain (369). It was in this warfare that he deserved and acquired the praise so graphically bestowed by Claudian :

“ Maduerunt *Saxone* fuso
Orcades ; incaluit *Pictorum* sanguine Thule ;
Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne.”—*In IV. Cons., Hon.*

F.—The country between the walls thus rescued from the grasp of the barbarians received the name of Valentia,^b in honour of the Emperor Valentinian ; and London about the same time, as deserving imperial rank, was styled Augusta^c Trinobantina ; but neither appellation was long continued.

A.—From this period till the final departure of the Romans, the state of Britain appears to have been in as much confusion as are the discordant particulars which can be gleaned from historians relative to the subject. (383) Maximus,^d an officer, revolted from his allegiance and assumed the purple with success ; in an expedition to Gaul he drew to his standard a considerable portion of the youth of Britain, whom he rewarded with lands in the province of Armorica. The island continued to be infested by various attacks of the Picts and Scots, which were frequently renewed, and as frequently repelled by the assistance of the Romans.

P.—From these incursions it would appear that the walls had ceased to afford security.

^a Ammian, Marcel. lib. 27, c. 7.

^c Ibid. lib. 27, c. 8.

^b Ibid. lib. 28, c. 5.

^d Zosimus, lib. 4.

F.—The strongest fortifications avail little without stout hearts behind them; and these barriers had now indeed somewhat fallen to decay: besides the barbarians often made descents from their shipping, against which the walls could afford no protection.

A.—In the beginning of the fifth century, Rome, being threatened by the arms of Alaric, withdrew its legions from Britain,^a as well as from the other frontiers, for the defence of Italy. The few soldiers remaining in the neglected province, instigated by a spirit of revolt, elected several of their officers to imperial power,^b who in a short period paid the price of their usurpation with their lives: the last of these, Constantine (407,) was a private soldier, and his name alone was the cause of his elevation. Like his predecessor Maximus, he drained Britain of such numbers of its youth to follow his fortunes in Gaul, as greatly to impair the strength of the province, and expose it to the various evils which ensued.

F.—The remarkable expression of Porphyry, just cited,^c “Britain, a province fertile of tyrants,” was surely as applicable to these usurpers as to any of the thirty tyrants who infested the empire under the reign of Gallienus, against some of whom it was originally applied.

A.—Rome at length being sacked by the Goths under the terrible Alaric (410,) Britain was left to her fate. In this extremity, a popular historian^d represents “the Britons as assembling in arms, throwing off the Roman yoke in a burst of national freedom, and rejoicing in the important discovery of their own strength.”

F.—I should think that instead of rejoicing in their

^a Claudian, *Bel. Get.* v. 416.

^b Zosimus, lib. 6.

^c *Contra Pelag.*

^d Gibbon, chap. 51.

strength, they rather trembled at the consciousness of their weakness. The Emperor Honorius indeed, yielding to the necessity of the times, wrote to the cities of Britain,^a desiring them to provide for their own security, though in terms sufficiently ambiguous as to give him a pretence for renewing his authority should a favourable exigency arise. But notwithstanding this acknowledgment of independence, these emancipated Britons, unable to repel the aggressions of the rapacious Scots and Picts, took the earliest opportunity of returning to their allegiance.

A.—Rome was not inattentive to the desire of the Britons, and a legion speedily appeared for their rescue. The supplication and relief were several times repeated; for as soon as the Romans withdrew the Picts and Scots approached. Harassed by their ravages, the Britons in despair once more despatched ambassadors to Rome, who with ashes on their heads^b demanded protection with the most importunate entreaty. For the last time a Roman legion was sent to their assistance, who immediately relieved the province from its pertinacious plunderers. After performing this good office, the soldiers assisted their ancient allies to repair the wall of Severus, instructed them in the various use of the Roman arms and discipline, and exhorting them to make a good use of their independence, took a final departure; which the Britons beheld with more dismay than their ancestors evinced at the first appearance of the Romans.

F.—The date of this departure has been an object of much dispute; but as Bede^c acknowledges that the Romans finally left Britain in the reign of Honorius, who died 425, it is safest to place it about that era.

^a Zosimus, lib. 6, c. 10. ^b Gildas, Hist. c. 15, 14. ^c Hist. lib. 1, c. 12.

P.—How prodigious is the contrast between the valour of Cassibelan and Caractacus, and the pusillanimity of these their degenerate descendants.

F.—Though these particulars are not entirely to be relied on, as they can scarcely be said to be authenticated by cotemporary writers, yet their credibility, I am afraid, is too well established by the complexion of subsequent events.

A.—The Romans having occupied Britain for the space of nearly four centuries, though they did not, as was said of Augustus, find the city of brick and leave it of marble, yet the alterations which they effected were striking and important. In recompense for the chains which they imposed, the Romans introduced civilization, laws, and various useful arts; sumptuous villas were erected, as their beautiful tessellated pavements yet evince; many fine towns were founded, tillage became general, and even vineyards were planted. At the departure of these conquerors all their improvements went to decay; nor did Britain for several centuries again attain an equal share of wealth and population.

P.—As Christianity had become the established religion of the empire, was it early introduced into Britain?

A.—Its history is very imperfectly known, and has been disfigured by various absurd fictions. Catholic doctors contend for the preaching of St. Peter; Protestant doctors for the preaching of St. Paul: both without any reasonable foundation. The monks of Glastonbury^a assert that the gospel was implanted by Joseph of Arimathea, who was buried in their churchyard; the miraculous budding of the hawthorn on

^a Gul. Malmesb. de Antiq. Glasi.

Christmas-day was long an infallible evidence of the fact. In the reign of Edward III.^a a licence was granted to one John Bloene to dig for the body, which is somewhat wonderful he could not find.

F.—Another tradition is, that Lucius, a certain king of Britain in the second century, having been converted, sent missionaries to Eleutherius, bishop of Rome, to be instructed in the orthodox doctrine. This story has been embellished by Geoffrey of Monmouth; but though it is of an older date, being mentioned by Bede,^b it must be considered as legendary.

A.—That many persons professing Christianity were to be found at an early period in Britain, and that a hierarchy of some sort, speedily obtained, is undoubted; as in the Council of Arles, A. D. 314,^c are to be found the names of three British bishops. Of the discipline of the British church we know little more than that it was independent of the church of Rome, being conducted by its own domestic synods and councils.^d Upon the whole, the Roman dominion in Britain, notwithstanding the splendid names which adorn in particular its earlier transactions, must be considered as matter of curiosity rather than of use; for though some visible architectural vestiges remain, the influence of ancient Rome has left no traces, either civil or ecclesiastical, upon our present institutions.

^a Fuller, p. 7.

^b De Sex Hujus Seculi Ætat.

^c Spelman, Concil. vol. 1.

^d Ibid.

DISSERTATION III.

Barfreston Church.

THE SAXONS.

F.—THIS delightful county of Kent must, from its situation, have been peopled earlier than any district in England. That it had made a greater progress in civilization, we learn from Cæsar,^a who observed that its inhabitants were the most humanized of all the Britons; and as in the subsequent dominion of the Saxons it was first erected into a kingdom, and first received the doctrines of Christianity, we naturally expect that it should abound in remains of antiquity.

A.—Canterbury possesses many of great magnificence; but I have rather brought you this pleasant ride of eight miles from Dover, to the village of Barfreston, for the purpose of inspecting its church, the most ancient perhaps in the kingdom, and an undoubted Saxon structure, though with a few Norman alterations. If we may believe Camden, about the year 633 parishes were instituted by Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury; his successor, Theodore, encouraged patrons to build churches (670;) and by an esteemed antiquary,^b this church of Barfreston is considered as one of those erected upon the recommendation of that prelate. It is, as you perceive, of remarkably small dimensions, being

^a De Bel. Gal. lib. 5, c. 14.

^b King, Muniment. Antiq. vol. 4.

scarcely twenty-four feet in length by sixteen in width. A partition wall divides it from a chancel of still more diminutive size, sixteen feet and a half by twelve and a half. It seems never to have possessed a tower, that ornament not being introduced till the reign of Edgar, three centuries later.

P.—It is to be wished that the pretensions of this church to such very high antiquity could be satisfactorily sustained; for Selden^a has clearly shewn that the clergy lived in common, without any division of parishes, long after the time mentioned by Camden. I am willing to admit that we have before us a genuine Saxon structure; but its real date I am afraid must be left to conjecture.

P.—What are the distinguishing features of Saxon architecture?

A.—The arch of a Saxon doorway is semicircular; on its mouldings it has a great variety of ornaments, often in a studied diversity; the capitals of the pillars which support it, whether two or more, instead of being uniform, like those of the Grecian orders, differ from each other; and the semicircular part of the arch is usually filled up by a transom stone, as if for its support, the ends of this stone resting upon the pillars, the distance between which is smaller than the diameter of the arch.

P.—But in this church the side windows are formed, not of semicircular but of pointed arches.

A.—They have been evidently tampered with by alterations in ages long subsequent to the erection of the church; indeed I recollect no Saxon structure but what has somewhat suffered in this way. The arches at the east end remain in their original shape, and the

^a Tithes, c. 9.

range of small arches in the second tier has considerable beauty; the circular window near the top is, like the side windows, of Norman origin; the arch within, which divides the chancel from the church, is pure Saxon.

P.—Are not some Saxon churches distinguished by the immense size and small height of their pillars?

A.—These circumstances are common also to the earliest Norman style; we must not suppose either, that for a period of three or four centuries the Saxon architecture continued entirely uniform; those immense pillars were not seen till the later age of the Anglo-Saxons; several of them remain at the present day in the cathedrals of Oxford and Gloucester; their capitals are less ornamented than those of an earlier, but more so than those of a later, date; one of the latest specimens is Waltham church, in Essex, built either in the reign of Edward the Confessor or of William the Conqueror.

P.—Are there no vestiges of British churches more ancient than the settlement of the Saxons?

A.—During the occupation of Britain by the Romans, it is generally thought that Christian worship was performed in private houses or in small cloisters. Yet a passage in Bede seems to intimate, that a church was dedicated at Verulam in honour of the martyr St. Alban, who suffered under the persecution of Dioclesian; but it was probably constructed with wood.

P.—Though it was the Romans who established Christianity in this island, yet at their departure I suppose it still continued to be the religion of the Britons?

A.—Unquestionably; and the virulence of theological dispute, the Pelagian controversy being now added to

their other misfortunes, no people ever exhibited a more deplorable spectacle of weakness, disunion, and misery. The Scots and Picts finding that the Romans had entirely relinquished Britain (425,) regarded the whole island as their certain prey, and devastated it with unrelenting ferocity. Gildas, a monk, who wrote in the sixth century, represents the conduct of the Britons as altogether dastardly; instead of opposing any effectual resistance to their enemies, they neglected even the feeble defence of the wall, or conducted it with so little judgment, that they were frequently plucked off it by the Picts and Scots, with hooks fastened to long poles.^a

F.—This representation, copied by Bede, and continued by the generality of succeeding historians, has been oppugned by a critic, who boasts of overturning the error of twelve centuries. According to the acute, though often fanciful, Whitaker, the Britons, after having shaken off the Roman yoke, convened the estates of the kingdom, chose a *Pendragon*, or dictator, and directed the national business with equal spirit and wisdom; the authorities in his own parish, Manchester, in particular, had obtained very nearly the point of political perfection.^b

A.—Though the critic may have discovered some inconsistencies in the story of Gildas, yet his own view of the state of British affairs cannot possibly be correct; the helplessness of the Britons is too apparent, whether arising from their long inusitation to arms or from their internal discords. The lamentations of the old monk, who has been called the British Jeremiah, are indeed shocking and melancholy: the unfortunate Britons, says he, forsook their houses, led a wandering life, and neglected the culture of their fields, which

^a Gildas, Hist. c. 15.

^b Hist. of Manchester, vol. 2. b. 2.

soon occasioned a famine so severe, and its concomitant, pestilence, that the Picts were compelled to desist from their incursions for several years. In this interval the Britons, returning to their tillage, and aided by favourable seasons, enjoyed an unaccustomed plenty of the necessities of life; but instead of providing against the future attacks of their enemies, their time was wasted in the intemperate enjoyment of their present abundance.

P.—This thoughtless generation seemed equally unfit for prosperity or adversity.

A.—Roused at length by the return of the Picts, the Britons once more applied to Rome (446,) in that memorable letter inscribed “*to Ælius, thrice consul, the groans of the Britons,*”^a which has scarcely a parallel for the abjectness of its lamentations. “The barbarians,” say they, “on the one hand chase us into the sea, the sea on the other throws us back upon the barbarians; and we have only the hard choice left us of perishing by the sword or by the waves.” But Rome, being sufficiently occupied with her own disasters, was compelled to refuse their supplications. In this extremity, a general assembly of the native princes was convened, amongst whom Vortigern, a prince of the west part of Britain, held the chief authority: by his counsels it was agreed to send a deputation into Germany, inviting the Saxons to their assistance and protection.^b

F.—A fatal suggestion, as the event proved, but which, I must think, has been too severely reprobated by historians, especially if, as some relate,^c the Saxons were at that time roving on the coast; the entire subjection which followed could not have been foreseen

^a Gildas, Hist. c. 17.

^b Bede, lib. 1. c. 15.

^c Nennius, c. 28.

as a necessary consequence; and Vortigern had a precedent, to be sure no very successful one, in the conduct of the Romans themselves, who incorporated in their armies the barbarians of various provinces.

P.—Of the Saxons thus introduced to our notice, the parent stock of the English nation, and from whom so large a part of its language, laws, and customs, is derived—what is the origin and previous history?

A.—The question of the infant philosopher, who, on being told that the earth was derived from chaos, enquired, and chaos whence? is almost as readily answered. From a fanciful resemblance of a very few words in their language to the Celtic, some have hastily considered the Saxons as a branch of the ancient Celts; better authorities deem them a part of the great Gothic or Teutonic family, who migrated into Europe, as it is supposed, from the shores of the Caspian Sea, at a much later period than the settlement of the Celts; and who, by occupying the coasts of the Baltic and the vast provinces of Germany, drove that people into narrower limits: the Sacæ, a nation dwelling near the river Jaxartes, may have been the ancestors of the Saxons; but it is not unlikely that their national appellation was derived from *sach*, a short sword, their military weapon.

F.—The first mention of the Saxons as a people, is, I think, by Ptolemy, the geographer, about the year 141; they then occupied a part of what is now called Jutland, with the isles of North Strandt, Busen, and Heligoland; thus situated, they soon became dexterous seamen and audacious pirates.

A.—By first forming a league with the Jutes, who inhabited the north of Jutland, a neighbouring tribe descended from the same stock, and afterwards with

the Angli, a people mentioned by Tacitus,^a who appear to have occupied a small district, in which is now situated the modern city of Sleswick; they so much increased their strength and reputation, that, in a short period, either by confederation or conquest, "*the Saxons*," became a general name for various people scattered from the Elbe to the Ems. At the era of the arrival of the British deputation, their power must have been considerable, as they had long since set at defiance all attempts of coercion from Rome.

P.—To a martial and adventurous race, such a request as that from Vortigern could not be unacceptable.

A.—Hengist and Horsa,^b two brothers, celebrated for their valour and nobility, being reputed to be sprung from Woden, the Saxon deity of war, embarked with sixteen hundred men in three long vessels, or *chiules*, still called *keeles* by the Newcastle boatmen, and landed in the Isle of Thanet (449;) immediately marching to the assistance of the Britons, they totally defeated the Picts and Scots, who had advanced as far as Stamford.

P.—The immediate purpose of the Britons was then obtained.

A.—But at a fatal price; the Saxon leaders, perceiving what advantages might be obtained from the weakness of Vortigern, proposed to send home for a reinforcement of their countrymen: this request it was difficult to deny, and a fresh swarm presently arrived, to the number of five thousand, in seventeen ships. To account for this imprudent facility in Vortigern, a story has been told by way of apology, that the British

^a De Morib. Germ.

^b Sax. Chron.

prince, having bestowed on Hengist the Isle of Thanet, was invited by that chieftain to a supper, at which his daughter Rowena appearing in rich attire, with a graceful mien, drank some wine from a golden bowl, saying in the Saxon tongue, *pær Deal, Kyniŋg*, or “king, be of health;” to which Vortigern replied, *ðrinc Deal*, or “drink health,”^a and becoming enamoured with her beauty, soon married the lady, though already possessing a wife, and he endowed her with the whole county of Kent.

P.—So nobly was rewarded the first health ever drank in Britain.

A.—The story is probably fictitious; but it is certain that Vortigern alienated the affections of the Britons, by his vices and the ill success of his counsels. The Saxons, whose rapacity was now keenly excited, at once threw off the mask, and forming an alliance with the Picts and Scots, declared open and implacable hostility against their former associates, attacking and despoiling them without measure or mercy.

P.—The Britons were then become sufficiently awake to their folly.

A.—But, alas! too late. The state of Britain cannot be viewed without a mixture of pity and indignation; the chiefs without union, the people without courage or conduct; many,^b says the querulous Gildas, flying to the mountains and forests, were intercepted and butchered, others were glad to accept of life, by becoming slaves to their conquerors; and so considerable a number took shelter beyond the sea, in Armorica, a district of Gaul, that that province henceforth assumed the name of Britany.

P.—But does it not seem extraordinary, that these exiles, who were unable to resist an invading enemy

^a Gal. Mon. lib. 6.

^b Gildas, Hist. c. 25.

at home, should have sufficient strength to predominate in a foreign soil?

A.—It is supposed that some British legionary soldiers, who had been rewarded with grants of land in Armorica, by the usurping Emperors Maximus and Constantine, kindly received their distressed and fugitive countrymen.

F.—This opinion is countenanced by a ridiculous legend,^a that, about fifty years before, Conan, the prince of Armorica, applied to Britain for a wife, with a competent number of females to furnish his unstocked colony; whereupon Ursula, the daughter of a Cornish chief, with eleven thousand virgins of the nobler blood, and sixty thousand of the meaner sort elected out of divers parts of the kingdom, were shipped at London, in compliance with this request; but the larger part of the fleet, bearing this extraordinary cargo, being miserably lost in a storm, and the remainder driven up the Rhine to Cologne, the women fell among a barbarous people, and were either killed or made slaves: some of their relics are said still to be preserved in that city, and masses for the repose of their souls are still performed at Manheim: our town of Maidenhead, in Berkshire, derives its name from the unfortunate Ursula. In the annals of the Romish church, the event is recorded as the martyrdom of the eleven thousand virgins, and the thirteenth day of October has been dedicated to their memory.

A.—Leaving this edifying story to its fate, the Britons who remained at home reduced to extremity, deposed Vortigern, and placing his son Vortimer at their head, fought several battles with various success, in one of which Horsæ the Saxon chief was slain, at Aylesford (455).^b

^a Selden, Notes on Drayton's Polyolbion, Song 8.

^b Sax. Chron.

P.—An equal share of resistance would then, probably, have been more than sufficient to repel the original aggressions of the Picts and Scots.

A.—Hengist, continually reinforced by fresh numbers of his countrymen, proceeded in a career of conquest, and established the kingdom of Kent, (457). Vortimer dying about this time, the British writers affirm that Vortigern resumed the government; and they relate a story of very doubtful credit, that, induced by his wife Rowena, he consented to hold a parley with Hengist; the place agreed upon was Stonehenge,^a whither both parties with their attendants were to repair unarmed: the Saxon chief, whose meaning was not peace but treachery, caused his men to conceal their weapons, and taking an opportunity to excite a quarrel when the Britons were heated with wine, he gave the watch word, *Nemed eupe yaxer*, draw your swords, on which his soldiers despatched three hundred of the most considerable persons in Britain, and the most able to protect it by their counsel or their arms. The life of Vortigern was spared, but he was kept in chains till he consented to grant the counties of Essex, Sussex, and Middlesex, to Hengist, by way of ransom: the unhappy monarch was soon after burnt in a tower in Wales, to which he had retired from the indignation of his subjects.^b

P.—This story undoubtedly savours much of the monk of Monmouth's extravagance.

A.—Hengist certainly added the greater part of these counties to his dominions, but not without considerable opposition, the Britons being now commanded by Ambrosius, descended of a Roman family, who delayed for some time the subjugation of his country: meanwhile, Hengist, to divide the force and

^a Nennius, c. 48.

^b Gal. Mon.

attention of the Britons, invited over his own and his brother's son,^a Octo and Ebessa: these young warriors were attended with such numerous followers, that they immediately took possession of the provinces of Northumberland and Valentia, then much depopulated.

P.—The prosperity of Hengist seems to have been nearly uninterrupted.

A.—After resisting an unsuccessful attack at Wipidfleet,^b in Kent, in which the Britons lost twelve chieftains and the Saxons but one, this able and enterprising monarch suffered little further disturbance, and dying (488,) left his newly acquired dominions in security to his posterity.

F.—The success of Hengist, in finding a throne where he only looked for booty, could not fail to inspire his countrymen with a desire to follow such a prosperous example.

A.—Many German adventurers flocked over at different times, and under different leaders. The next chieftain who aspired to or obtained the title of king, was Ella, a Saxon chief, who arrived with his three sons on the south coast (477;) after a desperate resistance by the Britons, he destroyed the fortress of Andrede Ceaster,^c a strong hold in Sussex, and extended his dominion over that and the adjoining county of Surrey; but the most celebrated of these kingdoms was Wessex, or the West Saxon. Cerdic with his son Kenric arrived in Hampshire (495,) but the Britons were so well prepared as to give him battle on the very day of his landing; and, though defeated on that and in many subsequent contests, they still defended, for several years, their liberties against the invaders. Cerdic, strengthened by a fresh arrival, and assisted by

^a Nennius, c. 57.

^b Sax. Chron.

^c Ibid.

the Saxons of Kent and Sussex, fought a bloody engagement near what is now the village of Cerdicsford, or Chardford, in Hampshire, so called in consequence of the victory, in which Nazan Leod, supposed to be the same person as Ambrosius, with five thousand of his Britons were killed on the field.^a

P.—The ancient British courage then revived when it was too late to be of any service.

A.—Not altogether so; at this juncture appeared the renowned Prince Arthur, whose heroic deeds have been celebrated in such romantic strains as far to surpass the bounds of credibility. But we may safely allow, in spite of poetical exaggeration, that for some years this Silurian chief sustained the declining fate of Britain; and after several severe contests, compelled the West Saxons to raise the siege of Badon-Hill, near Bath,^b by discomfiting them in a great battle (520;) the effects of which were so beneficial, that during his life their further progress was completely arrested. Cerdic however maintained his conquests, comprehending the counties of Hants, Dorset, Wilts, and Berks, and left them to his posterity: he died in 534, Arthur in 542.

P.—If Arthur could merely arrest the progress of his enemies, without being able to subdue them, or even to retake what they had acquired, how did his fame as a warrior rise to such a surpassing celebrity, as to have become familiar for so many centuries to the very ears of childhood throughout Europe?

F.—A French author, M. Le Grand, attributes his renown to national rivalry: the English, says he, jealous of the glory which Charlemagne and his peers had acquired from the writers of romance, became desirous of choosing a hero from amongst themselves; and no

^a Saxon Chron.

^b Gildas, c. 26.

person more fit presented himself than Arthur, as his actions, being but obscurely known in real history, admitted every embellishment of poetry.

A.—But the tale of

“ Uther’s son
Begirt with British and Armoric knights,”

is more ancient than these French Fabliaux; as an old British monk, Nennius, who flourished early in the ninth century, relates various particulars of Arthur and his friend the wizard Merlin, by him called Ambrosius. I am aware that these passages have been thought an interpolation in the history of Nennius; but I doubt not that various traditions of Arthur were preserved by the Welsh bards, to which additions were made by the Norman minstrels after the conquest, not in emulation of Charlemagne, but rather to depress the Saxon race by extolling the victorious deeds of their ancient enemies the Britons.

P.—Merlin is another personage whose name is equally familiar to me with that of Arthur, and of whose exploits I am equally ignorant, as well as of his prophecies.

A.—The renown of both undoubtedly appertains more to romance than history; and indeed Geoffrey of Monmouth is the only relater of their exploits who pretends to the dignity of an historian. Merlin is somewhat the elder, and his first appearance on the scene is thus exhibited: After the massacre of the three hundred Britons! at Stonehenge, Vortigern, applying to his magicians for advice, was recommended by them to erect a tower for his defence;^b but on making the attempt, whatever he built during the day sank into the earth at night. On seeking a remedy for this disaster,

^a Nennius, Hist. c. 43, 44.

^b Gal. Mon. lib. 6.

they told him that the stones must be cemented by the blood of a *man child* who never had a father. A prodigy answering this description is discovered in Merlin, whose mother was the daughter of the King of Demetia, or South Wales, and himself begotten by an incubus in the shape of a beautiful young man. Being brought into the presence of Vortigern, he informed the king that it was through ignorance that his magicians had recommended the shedding of blood; his disappointment would be relieved by ordering his workmen to dig under the foundations of his tower; they would there find a pond, in which, upon draining, they would discover two hollow stones, and in them two dragons fast asleep. The king was now possessed with the highest admiration of Merlin, thinking his wisdom to be little short of divine inspiration.

P.—This is the genuine spirit of knight errantry.

A.—The workmen having complied with these directions, as Vortigern was one day sitting on the brink of the pond, the two dragons, one white, the other red, began a tremendous battle, casting fire from their mouths in a manner terrible to behold; the white dragon at first compelled the red to retreat; but the latter taking courage, returned and assaulted his adversary with so much vigour as at length forced him to quit the field. The king demanding an explanation, Merlin burst into tears, and delivered what his prophetic spirit thus suggested: “Wo to the red dragon, for his banishment hasteneth; his lurking holes shall be seized by the white dragon, which signifies the Saxons whom you invited over; but the red denotes the British nation, which shall be oppressed by the white.” As the prophet continues he becomes less intelligible, proceeding in such sublime flights as these: “The ravenousness of kites shall be destroyed, and

the teeth of wolves blunted; the lion's whelps shall be transformed into sea fishes, and an eagle shall build her nest upon Mount Aravius." And so he goes on, commonly in a lugubrious strain, of sufficient length to fill twenty octavo pages; the following however will not excite tears: "An owl shall build her nest upon the walls of Gloucester, and in her nest shall be brought forth an ass."

"The Severn sea shall discharge itself through seven mouths, and the river Uske shall burn seven months."——"The monks in their cowls shall be compelled to marry, and their cry shall be heard upon the mountains of the Alps."

P.—There is no wonder at Hotspur's^a impatience with Owen Glendower's tedious prosing about

"The moldewarp and the ant,
The dreamer Merlin and his prophecies;
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-winged griffin and a moulting raven,
A crouching lion and a ramping cat.
With such a deal of skimble skamble stuff."

A.—No term can more adequately express these most nonsensical rhapsodies; yet, strange to say, they had a very powerful effect upon the credulous age in which they first appeared. In the twelfth century, a very learned German, Alanus de Insulis, wrote a commentary upon them, which has been twice since republished. It is said that one of these predictions, declaring that when the English money should become circular the Prince of Wales should be crowned in London, induced the unfortunate Llewelyn to take arms against Edward I.^b Nay, the very prophecy which you have quoted, of the moldewarp and the ant, we are told by an old writer, instigated Glendower to rebel against

^a Shak. 1st Part Hen. IV. act 3.

^b Mat. Westmin.

Henry IV.: "Being led away," says the author, "by the deviacion, not divination, of the Mawmet Merlin."^a

F.—Henry II. shewed a better understanding. There was a prediction that a king of England, returning from the conquest of Ireland, should die upon a certain druidical stone in Wales; Henry, passing over it, said aloud to all present, "Who will hereafter have faith in that liar Merlin?"^b

A.—One of the prophecies was oddly enough fulfilled by the union of the kingdoms of England and Scotland, under James I. "Cambria shall be filled with joy, and the oaks of Cornwall shall flourish; the island shall be called by the name of Brute, and the name given to it by strangers shall perish." Indeed the fashion of quoting Merlin continued so late as the civil wars; for in 1641 a book was published, called "The Life of Merlin, surnamed Ambrosius, his Prophecies and Predictions interpreted, and their Truth made good by our English Annals." This and other similar works seem to have consisted of expressions borrowed from the original Merlin, and mixed up with certainties of the past and probabilities of the future, according to the fancy or convenience of the writer. Swift's laughable burlesque, "The Wonderful Prophecy breathed forth in the year 1712," is a strange and profane amalgamation of Merlin with the Apocalypse.

P.—Merlin's life I suppose was as marvellous as his prognostications.

A.—He was equally great as an enchanter as a prophet; we know however but little more of his miracles, than that he brought Stonehenge from Ireland^c in one night, and placed it on Salisbury Plain as a monument to the three hundred murdered Britons; and also

^a Hall's Chron. p. 20. ^b Girald. Camb. Expug. Hib. ^c Gal. Mon. lib. 8.

that by the power of magic he assisted to transform Uther Pendragon into the likeness of Gorlois, duke of Cornwall, the husband of the beautiful Igerna; by which stratagem Arthur was begotten, after the manner in which Jupiter deceived Alcmena. Merlin's love to Morgana, the Lady of the Lake, and her ingratitude, are the inventions of a different writer, and seem to be of a later period.

P.—But the story is woefully incomplete without them.

A.—Merlin, desirous of honouring his birth-place, Carmardin, set about surrounding it with a wall of brass; but during the time his sprites were at work beneath the earth, he was sent for by Morgana into France, where by some means she cozened the great magician, and confined him in a tomb, for ever impervious to those who might have attempted his rescue.

P.—Spenser has given a beautiful description of the labours of Merlin's workmen, who were bound by an oath to continue their toil till their master's return:

“ But standing high aloft, low lay thine eare,
And there such ghastly noyse of yron chaines
And brasen candrons thou shalt rombling heare,
Which thousand sprights with long enduring paines
Doe tosse, that it will stoun thy feeble braines.”^a

And now having fairly laid Merlin asleep, let us proceed to the famous deeds of Prince Arthur.

A.—When you are told, in addition to the series of battles against the Saxons which terminated with his success at Badon Hill,^b that he was mortally wounded when fighting against his nephew Mordred, and that he was buried at Glastonbury, where his remains, of gigantic dimensions, were discovered in the reign of

^a Faerie Queene, book 3, canto 3.

^b Nennius, Hist. c. 61, 62.

Henry II.,^a you have learned all the particulars concerning him that have the least pretension to be considered as authentic.

F.—The deeds of Arthur have been blended with so many fables as even to provoke a disbelief of his real existence; but the testimony of Nennius is explicit.^b A just estimate of his character is thus given by William of Malmesbury:^c “This is that Arthur of whom the Britons even at this day speak so idly; a man right worthy to have been celebrated by true story, not false tales; seeing it was he that long time upheld his declining country, and even inspired martial courage into his countrymen.” By these idly speaking Britons were meant the Welsh bards, from whose traditions Geoffrey of Monmouth had borrowed his narrative; since the round table and the adventures of its knights, which have filled so many folios, were the invention of a somewhat subsequent period.

A.—From Geoffrey of Monmouth we have already learned that the birth of Arthur was nearly as supernatural as that of his friend Merlin. At the age of fifteen, by the death of his father, Uther Pendragon, who died by drinking water from a poisoned spring, Arthur succeeded to the Pendragonship of Britain; this office seems to have been equivalent to that of generalissimo, regularly elected by the British chiefs; and the name derived from a dragon borne on the standard, or on the helmet. Arthur early gave proofs of valour, by repeatedly defeating the Saxons in the north; but his principal exploit was at this battle of Badon, where, armed with his sword Escalabar, forged in the isle of Avallonia, with his lance Rone, and his great

^a Girald. Camb. Spec. Eccles. lib. 2, c. 11.

^b Hist. c. 61, 62.

^c De Gest. Ang. lib. 1.

shield Pridwin, he dispatched no less than four hundred and seventy of the enemy with his own hand.^a Arthur too was a great giant-killer; particularly, he slew one of these terrible scourges to the fair sex, in Cornwall, who wore a robe made of the beards of kings that he had killed in battle, and which the British prince brought away as a trophy. After these exploits our hero conquered Norway, Dacia, Aquitain, and Gaul; and by something like an anticlimax, he encountered at Paris, in single combat, a most formidable knight, Flollio, whom he subdued in the true chivalric style. To celebrate these victories, a splendid festival was observed the next Whitsuntide at Caerleon, where divers kings and princes were assembled; Arthur entertaining his royal and noble guests, and his Queen Guenever their ladies, in separate conclaves. On this occasion King Arthur founded an academy at Caerleon, and, assisted by Merlin, established the order of the round table.

P.—This institution, which is of universal celebrity, has I suppose an allegorical meaning.

A.—If we can admit that Arthur was its inventor, we may conclude that it was meant as the foundation of a military order; the distractions of Britain requiring an institution which, by distinguishing merit, might collect the worth of the nation about the person of the prince.

F.—Some authorities conceive the round table to be a species of tournament performed by a certain number of knights, who, before they went into the ring, sat down for refreshment at a circular table in the same order in which they were to engage: such a table of extreme ancient date, though not so old as the age of Arthur, is said to be preserved in the castle of Winchester.

^a Gal. Mon. lib. 8.

A.—But the merit of Arthur is not diminished, if he converted what was merely a military pastime into an useful political institution: in after times many chivalric societies with the name of the round table, in imitation of Arthur's, have existed: Mathew Paris speaks of one in the reign of Henry III. (1252,) which he expressly calls a tournament; Mortimer's table at Kenilworth, when he knighted his three sons, in the time of Edward I. is mentioned by Walsingham; and Edward III.'s at Windsor is of universal notoriety. The circular form was chosen to prevent disputes of precedence; some writers indeed attribute the invention to Charlemagne, who did not flourish till more than two centuries after Arthur; and they trace it to the custom of the old Gauls, whose chiefs, says Athenaus,^a were used to sit in circles, with their shield-bearers standing behind them.

F.—Admitting the round table to be a tournament, the reality of Arthur's institution at once falls to the ground; tournaments being undoubtedly the invention of a much later period, and consequently Arthur's round table never existed unless in the brains of the romance writers.

A.—Merlin's assistance was merely to the mechanical part: in constructing the table he exhausted all his skill; thirteen seats were placed round, in honour of the thirteen apostles; twelve only of these could be filled up, and those by the bravest and truest knights; the thirteenth seat represented that of the execrable traitor Judas. It was called the perilous chair, ever since a rash and presumptuous Saracen had dared to seat himself upon it; when on a sudden the floor gave

^a Deipnosoph. lib. 4.

way, and the miscreant was swallowed up and consumed by devouring flames.

F.—Here we recognise, not only the painting of the Fabliaux, but partly the date of the composition; the Saracens inspiring no terror in England till the age of the Crusades.

A.—Many other wonderful properties were attached to this table, which you will not expect me to detail. The three principal knights of Arthur's court were Sir Gawain, his nephew, the sage and faithful; Sir Lancelot, the gallant; and Sir Tristram, the warrior bard. Their adventures were well known to the old romance readers; and continued to be so popular, that *La Morte de Arthur*, containing "the life of King Arthur, and of his noble knights of the round table, and in the ende the dolorous deaths of them all," was one of the books early published by Caxton. After this celebration at Caerleon of Arthur's victories, he went to fight against the Romans, leaving his nephew Mordred, together with his Queen Guenever, guardians of the kingdom. But learning in his absence that they had married, and that Mordred had usurped the crown, he immediately returned, and gave battle to the traitor at Camlan, in Cornwall, who was killed in the field, and Arthur himself mortally wounded.

P.—This is but a sorry termination of so much glory.

A.—The king was now removed into the isle of Avallonia, in Somersetshire, by the elfin Lady of the Lake, the fair Morgana, the quondam friend of Merlin, for the purpose of healing his wounds; but never having been seen again by his subjects, it was supposed that she had conveyed him to Fairieland, whence he was expected to return, and lead the Cwinri in triumph

through the island. Incredible to state, this ridiculous belief actually obtained for many ages both in Armorica and Britain.

F.—The explainer of Merlin's prophecies, Alanus de Insulis, in the twelfth century relates, that if any person in Armorica had dared to doubt of the existence and return of Arthur, he would have run the chance of being stoned to death. This folly continued so long as to give rise to a proverb denoting excessive credulity :

“ Quibus si credideris,
Expectare poteris
Arturum cum Britonibus.”^a

“ In such folly if you trust,
Wait for Arthur from the dust.”

P.—Such then was Arthur, whose actions were judged worthy by our two great poets, Milton and Dryden, to be the subject of an epic poem.

F.—But which, whilst they meditated only, Sir Richard Blackmore put into execution :

“ Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

A.—About the same period that Arthur flourished, various tribes of adventurers, under several leaders whose names are not preserved, landed on the east coast of Britain ; and after fighting many battles, ultimately established three new kingdoms. Uffa assumed the title of king of East Anglia, containing the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge, about 575 ; whence his successors were called Uffians. Creda became king of Mercia, comprehending the midland counties of England, about 585 ; and Irkenwald, king of Essex, probably in the same year.

P.—You have explained the rise and formation of

^a Pet. Blesensis, Epis. 57.

six kingdoms only, Kent, Sussex, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, Essex; to make up the heptarchy, as its name implies, we of course require the seventh.

A.—The application of the term heptarchy is in itself not exactly correct; those Saxons who established themselves in the north of England by the invitation of Hengist, remained in an unsettled state, till Ida, a Saxon prince claiming a descent from Woden, arrived with a powerful reinforcement (547,) and assumed the title of King of Bernicia;^a which kingdom was formed chiefly of the old province of Valentia, situated between the Roman walls, and of which he made Bamborough Castle his capital. About the same time another chief, Ælla, received the appellation of King of Deiri, ruling the country between the Tyne and the Humber. Thus, properly speaking, these various kingdoms composed an octarchy; but the two latter being afterwards united (588,) under the name of Northumberland, a heptarchy for the space of three centuries prevailed in England.

P.—Is it ascertained by what particular tribes each of these kingdoms was established?

F.—Kent, the Isle of Wight, and part of Hampshire, were peopled by Jutes; Essex, Sussex, and the remaining parts of Wessex, by Saxons; East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumberland, by Angles: the latter tribe emigrated in such prodigious numbers, that their original province in Germany was left entirely depopulated.^b

A.—A dispute has arisen as to the fate of the conquered Britons. It was the commonly received notion that “those who fled not to the mountains perished by the sword;” which opinion was much founded on the entire absence of Celtic words in the English lan-

^a Saxon Chron.

^b Bede, lib. 1, c. 15.

guage; since this could not have happened had a large portion of the British been incorporated with their victors. Mr. Horne Tooke asserts that not a particle of Celtic exists in the English tongue; in contradiction to this statement, Mr. Whitaker^a gives a catalogue, somewhat fanciful indeed, of three thousand words; but these words, common to both languages, are just as likely to have been imported into the modern Welsh from the Saxon or Latin, as into English from the Celtic. The remark of Gildas, that "some were glad to accept of life by becoming slaves to their conquerors," has given occasion to Mr. Gibbon to compute their number at the unreasonable exaggeration of a million. As I could never trace the remotest vestige of any thing Celtic in the eastern part of the kingdom, I prefer adhering to the common belief. ~ If we draw a line from Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Isle of Wight, I have no doubt that in all places to the east of it, the Britons were literally extirpated. At the first invasion of the Saxons, life might be purchased at the price of slavery; but during one hundred and fifty years protracted warfare, I am convinced that few indeed were the old Britons who remained passive spectators of the slaughter of their countrymen.

F.—When the heptarchy was fully established, we can readily imagine that seven concurrent kingdoms, all founded by violence, and separated from each other by no natural boundaries, were perpetually engaged in hostilities.

A.—The history of the heptarchy is in itself but little known, and seems to be little worth knowing; Milton^b has declared that the skirmishes of kites or crows as much merit a particular narration as the bat-

^a Hist. of Manchest. vol. 2.

^b Hist. of Brit.

ties of the Saxon heptarchy. For the purpose of explaining local history or traditions, the succession of the monarchs may be consulted in the works of historians who treat minutely on the subject; Rapin, for example: but an attempt to bear them in memory would be both vain and useless, as the annals abound in names but are barren in events. It appears that the prince who possessed the greatest share of capacity and valour obtained for his kingdom a temporary and precarious ascendancy.

P.—But in the course of three centuries surely some examples of virtue or talent are worth rescuing from oblivion.

A.—During that long period the name of no single prince occurs which has descended to posterity with general and deserved renown. The first monarch who acquired a superiority of power was Ethelbert, king of Kent, the fourth in descent from Hengist; who about the year 570 reduced all the princes of the heptarchy, except the King of Northumberland, to a strict dependence upon himself. He was the first Saxon king that promulgated a body of laws; but the event of his reign by which he is chiefly distinguished, is the introduction of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons, by the monk Augustine.

F.—The church of Rome has seldom been deficient in zeal for the propagation of her tenets.

A.—The Pope Gregory the Great, when in the station only of archdeacon, observed in the market-place of Rome some Saxon youth exposed to sale; for the abominable traffic in human flesh prevailed during the greater part of the Saxon rule, and Bristol was the principal mart. Gregory, struck with the beauty of their fair complexion and blooming countenance, asked to

what country they belonged? being answered, they were *Angli*, or English, he replied, they should rather be called *Angeli*, or Angels; and enquiring further from what province they came, he was informed Deiri; on which he exclaimed *de ira eruti*—they are to be delivered from the wrath of God; and learning the name of their sovereign, which was *Ælla*,^a *Alleluia*, cried he, how fitly may they sing praises. Moved by these allusions, he prepared to undertake the conversion of Britain, of which object he had never lost sight; and now having acquired the tiara, he sent thither Augustine, a Roman monk, with forty associates.

F.—We must not confound this person with St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, a celebrated theologian, who lived about one hundred and fifty years earlier.

P.—Of what nature was the previous religion of the Saxons?

A.—A polytheism, very gross and very barbarous. They worshipped the sun and moon; Thor, the god of thunder; and Wóden, the god of war: the latter seemed to be their favourite deity, as they believed that those warriors who perished in battle were admitted after death into the Valhalla, or hall of the blessed, where, reposing on couches and attended by beautiful young damsels, they satiated themselves with mead, or ale, from the skulls of their enemies.^b

P.—Christianity could not be altogether unknown to these people, being the religion of the Britons, with whom they had now had a century's intercourse.

A.—But the Saxons despised the Britons too much to adopt any of their institutions, either civil or religious. The circumstance which facilitated the reception of the gospel was the mediation of Bertha, the daughter of

^a Bede, lib. 2, c. 1.

^b The Edda, Mallet's Northern Antiquities.

Caribert, king of Paris, and queen to Ethelbert; a woman whose irreproachable conduct induced her husband to lend a favourable ear to those doctrines of which she made profession. Augustine and his companions, on their arrival in Kent (597,) found less danger and difficulty than they had apprehended. The king, seated in the open air, where he believed the force of their magic would be more easily dissipated, heard their mission with respect,^a and appointed Canterbury for their residence, with permission to exercise their functions. At length Ethelbert was himself baptized, which induced many of his subjects to profess Christianity, as the monks thought proper to assume an appearance of the greatest lenity, telling the king that the service of Christ ought to be entirely voluntary.^b

F.—An excellent doctrine, and pity it is that it was not continued; for was not Ethelbert soon after exhorted in a letter from the Pope to exert the utmost rigour against the ancient superstitions, and to build up the new faith by every expedient of terror as well as of blandishment?^c

A.—This national conversion of the Kentish Saxons seems to have been of very doubtful sincerity. At the death of Ethelbert in 616, his successor Eadbald, seduced by a passion for his mother-in-law, the second wife of Ethelbert, deserted the Christian faith, and his whole people returned with him to the idolatry of their ancestors;^d and when, divorcing himself from this incestuous marriage, he again professed the doctrines of the gospel, the same people embraced them with equal facility.

P.—Did the ascendancy which Kent had acquired, expire with Ethelbert?

^a Bede, lib. 1, c. 25. ^b Lib. 1, c. 26. ^c Lib. 1, c. 32. ^d Lib. 2, c. 5.

A.—A short time before the death of that prosperous and excellent prince, who reigned fifty years with much glory, Adelfrid, the king of Bernicia, having married Acca, the daughter of Ælla, king of Deiri, and expelled her infant brother, Edwin, from the throne, united those two provinces (588,) and presently assumed the chief influence in the heptarchy, as king of Northumberland. Having extended his dominions on all sides, he besieged Chester, then belonging to Brocmail, the British king of Powis. As the Britons marched out of that city with all their forces to meet the enemy, they were attended by a body of twelve hundred and fifty monks from the neighbouring monastery of Bangor: this religious fraternity stood at a small distance from the field, encouraging their friends about to combat. Adelfrid enquiring the reason of this unusual appearance, was told that these priests had come to pray against him: "Then they are as much our enemies," said he, "as those who intend to fight against us;" and he immediately sent a detachment, which barbarously fell upon them with such execution that only fifty escaped with their lives (613).^a

P.—I was not aware that monks and monasteries existed at so early a period in Britain.

F.—The monastery at Bangor, in Flintshire (not the city in Cærnarvonshire, which is at present the see of a bishop,) as it was one of the largest, was also one of the earliest religious houses known in any part of the world. During the persecutions of Dioclesian, when Alban suffered martyrdom at Verulam, many British Christians were compelled to seek among beasts, in deserts and solitude, that security which they found no longer among mankind. After the urgency of the danger had passed, similarity of suffering induced several per-

^a Brompton, p. 779.

sons who had thus escaped to unite into societies; and as many of them were clergy, who in those times had no distinct cure, they thus formed a collegiate body, which became an asylum of religion and a seminary of learning.

P.—Were these monastic societies controlled by vows of celibacy and seclusion?

F.—Not at this early period; the association at Bangor seems to have left its members at perfect liberty. It is said by Bede^a to have consisted at one time of upwards of two thousand persons, who maintained themselves by their own labour; being divided into seven classes, consisting of three hundred each. The building was so extensive that the opposite gates were a mile asunder: not a vestige at present remains. The celebrated Pelagius, known in ecclesiastical history as the propagator of some peculiar doctrines, received his education in this monastery.

P.—When Augustine succeeded in his conversion of the Saxons in Kent, it naturally follows that he would endeavour to form a correspondence with the British bishops already established in the island.

A.—A conference was appointed to be held between him and a deputation of some monks from this very society at Bangor. These fathers before their departure from Wales, applied to an old hermit for advice how to act; the recluse intimated that if Augustine were a man sent from God, they should submit to his direction. And on their asking how they were to ascertain this point, he replied, "If on your arrival in his presence Augustine rise to salute you, he is God's messenger; but if not, he is proud; have no more to do with him."

F.—This old hermit was certainly no fool.

^a Hist. lib. 2, c. 2.

A.—When the monks came to the place of assembly, Augustine was sitting under an oak tree to receive them; but he deigned not to rise at their appearance. The British were required to alter the period of celebrating Easter, and the mode of administering baptism—two points in which they differed from the Romish ritual; and also to acknowledge the Pope's authority. The monks replied that they yielded respect to all Christians, but they knew of no particular obedience due to the holy father, being already under the guidance of their own pastor the Bishop of Caerleon; the other points they also refused, in conformity with the hermit's admonition, probably considering them as the first step of papal encroachment.^a But, returning to our Northumbrian king; Adelfrid, though eminently successful in war, was not exempt from anxiety. Edwin, whom he had unjustly dispossessed of the crown of Deiri, now grown to man's estate, wandered from place to place, in continual danger from the attempts of the usurper upon his life; at length the royal youth received protection from Redwald, king of the East Angles, in whose court his engaging demeanour procured him general esteem. Adelfrid, alarmed at this circumstance, solicited Redwald both by threats and promises to kill or deliver up his victim. Thus entreated, the integrity of the East Anglian sovereign began to waver, and a council was called to decide the fate of Edwin.

P.—When men can debate on an act of villany, the result is easy to be anticipated.

A.—The story of Edwin's escape from the impending danger is told by Bede^b with a simplicity that is highly touching; I will relate it as translated by Milton, certainly in a style that would not be expected by the

^a Bede, lib. 2, c. 2.

^b Lib. 2, c. 12.

readers of *Paradise Lost*: “ One of Edwin’s faithful companions (of which he had some few with him in the court of Redwald that never shrunk from his adversity,) about the first hour of night comes in haste to his chamber, and calling him forth for better secrecy, reveals to him his danger, and offers him his aid to make escape ; but that course not approved, as seeming dishonourable, without more manifest cause, to begin distrust towards one who had so long been his only refuge, the friend departs. Edwin, left alone without the palace gate, full of sadness and perplexed thoughts, discerns about the dead of night a man, neither by countenance nor by habit to him known, who after salutation, asked him why at this hour, when all others were at rest, he alone so sadly sat waking on a cold stone ? Edwin not a little misdoubting who he might be, asked him again what his sitting within doors or without concerned him to know ? To whom he again, ‘ Think not that who thou art, or why sitting here, or what danger hangs over thee, is to me unknown : but what would you promise to that man who ever would befriend you out of all these troubles, and persuade Redwald to the like ? ’ ‘ All that I am able,’ answered Edwin ; and he, ‘ What if the same man should promise to make you greater than any English king hath been before you.’ ‘ I should not doubt,’ quoth Edwin, ‘ to be answerably grateful.” ‘ And what if to all this he would inform you,’ said the other, ‘ in a way to happiness beyond what any of your ancestors hath known, would you hearken to his counsel ? ’ Edwin without stopping, promised he would ; and the other laying his right hand on Edwin’s head, ‘ When this sign,’ saith he, ‘ shall next befall thee, remember this time of night and this discourse, to perform what thou hast promised.’ And with these words dis-

appearing, he left Edwin much revived, but not less filled with wonder."^a

P.—Rational people will conclude this to have been a dream.

A.—Why it was introduced you will learn hereafter. The friend who had counselled Edwin to flee, now returning, informed him that he was safe; the solicitations of the queen had conquered the perfidious intention of Redwald, who on coming to this conclusion, judged it safest not to await the resentment of Adelfrid; but marching with an army into Northumberland, he attacked and defeated that monarch, and placed Edwin in the vacant throne.

P.—An unexpected though not an unjust retaliation.

A.—Edwin became one of the most distinguished princes of the heptarchy; he so far reformed the licentious habits of his subjects, that it was said during his reign a woman with a babe at her breast might travel over the island without sustaining an injury. The affection which he inspired in his servants was proved on a memorable occasion (626:) an assassin employed by Cuichelm, king of Wessex, having entered the apartment of the Northumbrian prince, under the guise of a messenger, rushed upon his person with a drawn dagger; when Lilla, an officer, seeing his master's danger, and having no other means of intercepting the blow, threw himself between the king and the weapon, which was pushed with such force that, after piercing through the body of the faithful servant, it wounded the rescued monarch.^b

P.—Such devoted attachments presuppose a great share of merit.

A.—Edwin having espoused Edilburga, the daughter of Ethelbert, the deceased king of Kent, that princess

^a Milton, Hist. of Brit.

^b Bede, lib. 2, c. 9.

was accompanied to Northumberland by Paulinus, a Roman ecclesiastic, who did not fail to ascribe the deliverance of the king to the protection of Christ. Edwin being pressed by the solicitations of this missionary, promised that if he should return victorious from a meditated expedition against the perfidious Cuichelm, he would embrace the profession of the gospel. Having happily accomplished this undertaking, but still delaying to acknowledge the new faith, Paulinus on a certain day, laying his right hand on the king's head, asked him if he remembered what that sign meant? Edwin, trembling and amazed, rose up, and fell at the new apostle's feet. "Behold," said Paulinus, raising him from the ground, "God hath delivered you from your enemies, and given you the kingdom, perform now what long since you promised."^a

P.—How did Paulinus become acquainted with the secret?

F.—As Edwin was married, there is no need to resort to a miracle for its disclosure.

A.—The story is merely legendary, but indicative of the opinions of the age. Edwin having thought fit to consult his council on the subject of changing his religion, was surprised by the facility with which Coiffi, the high priest, assisted his inclinations: "No one," said that person, "has worshipped the gods more assiduously than myself, and yet few have been less fortunate; I am weary of deities who are so indifferent, or so ungrateful, and will willingly try my fortune under a new religion."^b

F.—Such sentiments, I suspect, are more frequently entertained than expressed.

A.—The reply of a thane, whom the king next consulted, exhibits a vivid and not displeasing picture:

^a Bede, Hist. lib. 2, c. 12.

^b Lib. 2, c. 15.

“Often,” said the Saxon noble, “in the depth of winter, O king! whilst feasting with your thanes, and the fire is blazing on the hearth in the midst of the hall, have you seen a bird, pelted by the storm, enter at one door and escape at the other; during its passage it was visible, but whence it came or whither it went you knew not. Such to me appears the life of man: he walks the earth for a few years; but what precedes his birth, or what is to follow after his death, we cannot tell. If the new religion can unfold these secrets, it must be worthy your attention.”^a Thus seconded, Edwin with his subjects immediately embraced the Christian faith; but neither his merits nor his valour could secure him against the turbulence of those barbarous times; he was attacked by Penda, king of Mercia, and slain in battle at Hatfield-chace, in Yorkshire (633).^b

F.—Most of the princes of this and the subsequent age, who did not retire early into monasteries, seem to have perished by a violent death.

A.—The whole kingdom of Northumberland became involved in discord and confusion, from which it was in a small measure relieved by the vigour of Oswald, the son of the former king Adelfrid; but he being unfortunately slain in battle by the same ambitious neighbour, Penda (642),^c such scenes of anarchy, treachery, and murder followed, that no country can furnish a parallel. You might indeed say that few princes in this age escaped a violent end, as of fourteen kings that had assumed the Northumbrian sceptre in the course of a single century, one only died in his bed.

F.—The Emperor Charlemagne very truly declared that these Northumbrians were worse than Pagans.^d

^a Bede, Hist. lib. 2, c. 13. ^b Saxon Chron. ^c Bede, Hist. lib. 3, c. 9.

^d Gul. Malmesb. lib. 1, c. 5.

A.—Under Penda the kingdom of Mercia arose to great consideration in the heptarchy. This ferocious prince was engaged in perpetual hostilities with all the neighbouring states; three of the East Anglian kings perished successively in battle against him; but in the eightieth year of his age he met with the same fate from Oswy, the brother of the late Oswald, king of Northumberland (655).^a Mercia however continued to maintain a respectable station, under Peada, the son of Penda, who having married a Northumbrian princess educated in the Christian faith, embraced and established that doctrine in his dominions.

F.—Thus the fair sex had the merit of introducing Christianity into the most considerable kingdoms of the heptarchy.

A.—The various states now maintained for nearly a century a tolerable share of harmony with each other. The events of the heptarchy are known chiefly from the pen of venerable Bede; but during this period he has told so few particulars, that his relation may be called rather a calendar of names than a history of events, and leaves us uncertain, says Milton, whether he was wanting to his matter, or his matter to him. We learn that the kingdom of Wessex, being governed by Ceodwalla, a warlike and enterprising prince, was increased in power by the conquest of Sussex, the first step made by the West Saxons towards acquiring the sole monarchy of England. Ceodwalla at length, tired with the pursuits of ambition, undertook a pilgrimage to Rome; where he received baptism, and there died (689).^b His successor, Ina, is more distinguished as a legislator than as a conqueror, many of his laws being still extant; yet this prince was by no means deficient in military prowess.^c

^a Bede, lib. 5, c. 24.

^b Lib. 5, c. 7.

^c Saxon Chron.

He added the counties of Somerset and Devon to his dominions, and, what is indeed deserving remembrance, treated the vanquished with an unusual share of clemency, allowing the proprietors to retain possession of their lands, and encouraging marriages between them and his Saxon subjects: in the decline of his age, Ina, at the suggestion of his queen Ethelburga, made a pilgrimage to Rome, and at his return shut himself up in a convent, where he died (728).

P.—This fashion of forsaking the use of arms and retiring into monasteries, especially if it prevailed with the nobility and common people as well as with the monarchs, would seem to denote some decline of the ancient ferocity.

A.—The same historian, Bede,^a though himself a monk, yet with considerable sagacity predicts the evil effects of this practice, as tending to deprive the nation of its means of defence; an opinion, which the events of a subsequent age fatally confirmed; nor were the frequent pilgrimages to Rome without their inconvenience, as they exhausted the wealth of the island and promoted the corruption of manners: there is a letter extant from Boniface, archbishop of Mentz, to Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury, in which the former prelate exhorts his brother to prevent the pilgrimage of the English nuns to Rome, as it frequently happened that they lost their virtue before their return.^b

F.—These ladies probably considered that, as they were sure of a plenary remission of their sins when they arrived at their journey's end, there was no great harm in adding a little to the number by the way.

A.—Mercia, under the reign of Offa, a prince of the blood who ascended the throne (755),^c became the most

^a Hist. lib. 5. c. 25. ^b Spelman, Conc. tom. I, p. 257. ^c Sax. Chron.

conspicuous kingdom of the heptarchy. This ambitious monarch enlarged his dominions at the expense of his Saxon neighbours, and drove the British to their mountains in Wales; to secure his acquisitions on that side, he ordered a dyke to be formed from the mouth of the Wye on the south, to the river Dee in Flintshire: the traces of this extensive work are yet visible in many places.

F.—Offa's work, though called a dyke, was rather a mound or low bank between two ditches, it did not effectually repel the incursions of the Welsh, nor did it form an exact boundary, the Welshmen often passing over it. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, Harold was sent against them with light armed troops, ravaged the country, and made a law, that every Briton found with a weapon on this side of the dyke, should lose his right hand.^a

P.—Are the excavations of a similar nature in other parts of England, the Wansdike on Salisbury Plain for instance, and that remarkable trench on Newmarket-heath, called the Devil's-ditch, to be attributed to the Saxons?

F.—The first work is certainly more ancient: Dr. Stukely attributes it, with sufficient probability, to the Belgæ, who settled in Britain before the invasion of Cæsar, to defend themselves against the hostility of the aboriginal natives; but, as an instance how absurdly antiquaries will jump to a conclusion, having got the scent, he decides that the Wansdike was the work of Divitiacus, a Belgian monarch, who, Cæsar^b tells us, had acquired chief authority in Britain; and he very gravely assures us, that the town of Devizes derives its name from that ancient chieftain.^c

^a Joan Sarisb. de nugis Curial. lib. 6.

^b De Bel. Gal. lib. 2. c. 4.

^c Antiquities, &c. vol. 1, p. 145.

A.—It is probable that the Saxons might extend, if they did not create, these works, and apply them either as a boundary or defence: it is remarkable, that they seem to be constructed as a security for the protection of those people who dwelt nearest the sea. This undertaking of Offa's has caused his name to be better remembered than that of any other prince of the heptarchy; but his great qualities were miserably tarnished by an act of treachery, not surpassed by any thing in the Saxon annals. Ethelbert, king of the East Angles, a young prince of considerable merit, having paid his addresses to Elfrida the daughter of Offa, was invited with his retinue to Hereford, in order to celebrate the nuptials: amidst the festivities of such an occasion, he was decoyed into a distant chamber, and there beheaded: the East Anglian nobility had secret warning to escape. Elfrida, who abhorred her father's cruelty, retired to a nunnery, and Offa, having extinguished the royal race, added the kingdom of East Anglia to his own dominions.^a

P.—This story is a convincing proof that a barbarous age is not the period of sincerity and truth: no such transaction could now take place in civilized Europe.

A.—You will not be displeased to learn, that neither the continued prosperity of Offa's reign, nor the distinctions that he received from the friendship and correspondence of Charlemagne, appeased the stings of remorse; to stifle which he had recourse to all the tricks of monkish devotion: he made a pilgrimage to Rome; endowed monasteries and churches; and, the better to ingratiate himself with the pope, he engaged to pay a yearly sum for the support of an English College at Rome,^b which was collected by the im-

^a Brompton, p. 750.

^b Spelman, Conc. p. 230. 310.

sition of a tax of a penny on each house in his dominions, of a certain value; this was the origin of Peter's Pence, or Romescot, afterwards claimed as a tribute by the holy see:^a Matthew of Westminster attributes the introduction of it to King Ina with little probability. Offa died after a reign of more than thirty years (794,) and with him ended the superiority of Mercia.

P.—It is pleasing to reflect, that such atrocious wickedness as Offa's conferred no lasting benefit either on himself or his posterity.

A.—Mercia falling a prey to dissension and tumults, the kingdom of Wessex now assumed the chief station; Brithric at this period filled the throne, a prince not particularly distinguished except by his tragical death: his wife Eadburga, the daughter of Offa, a woman equally infamous for cruelty and incontinence, had conceived an implacable hatred against a young nobleman who had acquired her husband's friendship, and for the purpose of accomplishing his destruction, she prepared a cup of poison, of which the king inadvertently partaking lost his life, as did his unfortunate favourite (800).^b

F.—The race of Offa seems not to have degenerated from its pristine atrocity.

A.—The West Saxons vented their imprecations against the murderess, who escaped into France: being there presented to Charlemagne, he asked her, which she would prefer as a husband, himself or his son? "Your son, (she replied,) for he is younger."^c The Emperor was displeased at this uncourtly answer, but made her a present of an opulent monastery, with the title of Abbess, from which, on account of the dissoluteness

^a Roger Hoveden, Pars Post.

^b Asser.

^c Ibid.

of her conduct, she was soon expelled: after many adventures, this wife and daughter of a king terminated a miserable existence, in rags and beggary, at Pavia.^a

F.—It would appear that the Saxons had made small progress in knowledge or humanity since their first establishment in Britain, which, as they had embraced the Christian faith, seems to require explanation.

A.—We are to recollect, that the Christianity of that age was mixed up with so large a portion of credulity and superstition, that it tended but little to improve the understanding or correct the morals; the perusal of the scriptures was nearly unknown; monastic observances, the belief of miraculous interpositions, and a reverence for saints and relics, usurped the place of rational piety: remorse of conscience was appeased, not by amendment of life, but in the lower class by abject penances, and by servility to the monks; and in the higher by bounty to the church, which atoned for every species of crime and violence.

P.—This is really a sweeping conclusion against the Saxon clergy.

A.—The earlier dignitaries of the church, the archbishops Honorius and Theodore, in the seventh century, who indeed were foreigners, were men of much merit and learning, the latter particularly, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia; Fuller calls him a fellow citizen of St. Paul: he founded a library at Canterbury, and even read lectures on the Greek tongue; his scholars were dispersed in several monasteries;^b but this sprinkling of letters continued for a marvellously short period, and never extended beyond the cloister; the people at large having a sovereign contempt for literature, en-

^a Asser.

^b Bede, lib. 4, c. 2.

couraged the notable maxim, that a boy who feared the rod of a pedagogue would never look an enemy in the face. The generality of the priesthood too were nearly as ignorant and barbarous as the laity; yet it is but just to make some exceptions, such as venerable Bede for instance, whose character truly deserves that appellation.

P.—By what means has the epithet ‘venerable’ become constantly associated with the name of Bede, and which has no doubt extended his reputation?

F.—At the death of Bede, a young monk, studying to make his epitaph in rhyming Latin, got thus far,

“Hæc sunt in fossa; BEDÆ—OSSA.”

But not being an adept in poetry he was unable to fill up the hiatus, and after tormenting himself to no purpose fell asleep; in the morning, to his great surprise, he found the line completed, the word *venerabilis*, having been inserted by an angel,^a the meaning, in no very exact rhyme, being,

“Here in the silent grave are laid
The bones of venerable Bede.”

A.—Bede seems to stand aloof as the only learned Saxon whose name is generally remembered: this excellent person was born at Wearmouth, in the bishopric of Durham (672;) his whole time was devoted to study and religion; and the fame of his learning became so great, that he received an invitation from Pope Sergius to visit Rome, but he modestly declined the honour, and passed the greater part of his life in the monastery of Jarrow, where he died (735).

F.—His last moments exhibit a pleasing example of that holy calm which arises from a consciousness of

^a Flores. Sanct. p. 597. Biog. Brit.

living and dying in the performance of acts of duty. Being engaged in translating the gospel of St. John into the Saxon tongue, his amanuensis observed, "My beloved master, there yet remains one sentence unwritten." "Write it then quickly," replied Bede; and the young man having indited the sentence, answered, "It is finished." "It is indeed finished," said the dying saint, and quietly expired.^a

A.—The attainments of Bede were universal, and would have done honour to any age; his "*Ecclesiastical History*," is the foundation of by far the greater part of our knowledge of the earlier Saxons, and is much valued for its faithfulness, though retaining a strong tinct of monkish credulity. Bede maintained an extensive correspondence, but after his death, the small remains of learning seem gradually to have expired, and never to have revived with the Anglo Saxons in equal vigour.

F.—Yet the fame of Alcuin, a native of Yorkshire, said to be a pupil of Bede's, was so celebrated, that Charlemagne established him in France as his own preceptor in the sciences. Alcuin became a great benefactor to various French universities, particularly that of Paris: he died in 804. His works have been published in folio, consisting chiefly of letters, and of theological subjects, which savour too much of that ignorant age to be now at all readable; there is also a Latin poem, consisting of 1600 lines, "*De pontificis et sanctis Ecclesiæ Eboracensis*," which throws some light on the studies then in vogue.

A.—The early Anglo Saxons were not without their saints, such as Cuthbert, Aldhelm, Wilfrid, and others, who had sufficient learning to occupy the high places

^a Simeon, *Dunelm. lib. 1, c. 15.*

of the church with decorum; but they have left nothing which can instruct or entertain posterity. The small additional cotemporary information respecting the period of the heptarchy, is gleaned from Eddius and Nennius; the former of whom, wrote the life of St. Wilfrid, containing many passages explanatory of civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs: this person flourished about the year 720; he was, says Bede,^a the best singer in the north. Nennius was a Briton and abbot of Bangor: some have thought that he was one of the fifty monks who escaped the slaughter of their twelve hundred brethren by Adelfrid; but he himself states, that he wrote his "*Eulogium Britanniae sive Historia Britonum*," in the year 858; much of the work is supposed to have been compiled or transcribed from the History of the Monk Elvodugus. Could the text be relied on as genuine, which I see no great reason to doubt, it would help to decide some controverted points, as he mentions the story of Brute and the deeds of Prince Arthur.^b

F.—We must not pass over, in this place, the querulous Gildas, a British monk of Bangor, who lived during the sixth century, and is consequently our first native historian: he escaped into Armorica from the destroying arms of the Saxons; the cruel inflictions of which people upon his unfortunate countrymen, he so wofully details in his "*Epistola de excidio Britanniae*."

A.—Returning to the kingdom of Wessex: at the death of Brithric, Egbert, descended from the brother of King Ina, succeeded to the throne. This prince was supposed to possess a better title than the late unfortunate monarch: conscious of his danger, he had early

^a Hist. lib. 4, c. 2.

^b Nennius, Hist. c. 4. & 62.

retired into France, and by serving in the armies of Charlemagne,^a acquired that knowledge of mankind and superior military skill, which afterwards enabled him to reduce the kingdoms of the heptarchy under his single government; the royal families of each having now become extinct, Egbert was the sole descendant of those first conquerors, who enhanced their authority by claiming a descent from Woden; yet, notwithstanding this tempting circumstance, he did not commence hostilities against his Saxon neighbours, but chose rather to turn his arms against the Britons in Cornwall:^b from the conquest of that country, he was recalled by the attack of Bernulf, king of Mercia, against whom he obtained a complete victory, near Elland,^c in Wiltshire; and by several subsequent battles, he entirely broke the power of that formidable rival, who was slain in the field, and in a short time united the kingdom to his own.

P.—Did the remaining states of the heptarchy lose their independence with the same facility?

A.—Sussex, always weak, had long since fallen under the power of the West Saxons; Kent and Essex had become tributary to the King of Mercia, who had also reduced East Anglia to subjection: these minor kingdoms made small resistance to the arms of the new invader, if they did not rather invite his authority; and Northumberland, weary with intestine contentions, readily submitted (827). Thus did Egbert, from the fortunate circumstance of his illustrious descent, united with prudence and valour, attain the high honour of being the first king of that large portion of Britain, which soon after acquired the name of England.^d

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 1.

^c Sax. Chron.

^b Sax. Chron.

^d Ibid.

DISSERTATION IV.

Canute's Tower,

ST. EDMUNDSBURY.

THE SAXONS AND DANES.

	A. D.		A. D.
EGBERT - - - - -	827	EDWY - - - - -	955
ETHELWOLF - - - - -	838	EDGAR - - - - -	959
ETHELBALD - - - - -	857	EDWARD THE MARTYR -	975
ETHELBERT - - - - -	860	ETHELRED - - - - -	978
ETHERED - - - - -	866	EDMUND IRONSIDE - -	1016
ALFRED - - - - -	871	CANUTE . - - - -	1017
EDWARD THE ELDER -	901	HAROLD HAREFOOT - -	1035
ATHELSTAN - - - - -	925	HARDICANUTE - - -	1039
EDMUND - - - - -	941	EDWARD THE CONFESSOR,	1041
EDRED - - - - -	946	HAROLD - - - - -	1066

F.—THIS charming town, St. Edmundsbury, so agreeably situated on a gentle acclivity, equals in attraction any that I have seen in the kingdom: the rich fertile enclosures on the south, announce abundance, whilst the fine open champaign country to the north, indicates the purest and most healthful atmosphere.

A.—Thus happily circumstanced, it can be no matter of surprise that it was chosen as the seat of a monastery, the founders and inhabitants of such institutions being admirable judges of these advantages: the ruins, which at this moment break upon our view, bespeak the establishment to have been one of the most exten-

sive, as it was one of the earliest and richest, in the island.

P.—It was not, I suppose, of British origin, nor founded till after the conversion of the East Anglian Saxons.

A.—To Sigebert,^a a king of that nation, we must attribute the merit, if such it be, of the foundation, about the year 633, a short time after the first introduction of Christianity into East Anglia by Felix the Burgundian, bishop of Dunwich. Indeed we must admit that, from the imperfect conversion of the natives and the ferocity of the times, such establishments were almost necessary to the support of the Christian faith: they were the residence of the bishops and their clergy, who preached and administered the sacraments in the neighbouring country. Monasteries too, from the security and abundance which they afforded, being well built and well endowed, were incomparably the most comfortable places of habitation in the kingdom; and as afterwards an opinion prevailed, that as soon as any person put on the garb of a monk all his sins were forgiven, it is no wonder that they were crowded by persons of both sexes and of every condition.

F.—It would be uncandid to deny, that to many these institutions offered an agreeable asylum:

“Where penitence might plant her meek abode,
And hermit contemplation meet his God;”

yet from the effects which we see produced by monasteries still subsisting in other countries, I am well content that their picturesque ruins only remain to adorn the prospect in this.

P.—The magnificent gateway now before us seems

^a Bede, lib. 5, c. 18.

of comparatively modern erection to the times of which you are speaking.

A.—It was built in the reign of Richard the Second, and remains an unrivalled specimen of the taste of the age; but at a small distance we are irresistibly attracted by a square tower of extraordinary antiquity.

P.—The round arches, unmixed with any pointed windows, and especially its great arch of entrance, together with its venerable state of decay, induce a conclusion that it must be referred to the period of the Saxons.

A.—I am of opinion that to the liberality of Canute the Great we are indebted for this fine piece of antiquity, about the year 1020; some antiquaries place it near fifty years later, and attribute its erection to Baldwyn the Abbot, under William the Conqueror. It possesses all the genuine characteristics of the Saxon architecture; but it must be acknowledged that no certain criterion exists to distinguish the later Saxon from the earlier Norman style.

P.—It is now used as a campanile, or bell-tower, to the church of St. James: do you think that such was its original destination?

A.—It was undoubtedly the grand portal which led to the old abbey church, the arches of whose principal front you yet behold, oddly enough filled up with modern dwellings; but I think it hardly of sufficient dimensions to have been intended as a campanile to a church of such magnitude as the ancient structure.

P.—What induced the powerful Canute to pay any particular regard to St. Edmundsbury?

A.—In the year 870, the Danes, his marauding countrymen, having burnt Ely, took possession of Thetford, when Edmund, king of East Anglia, assailing them, was put to flight, and taken prisoner; being

bound to a stake, he was barbarously shot to death with arrows, refusing to renounce his faith in Christianity:^a his body being removed to this place, then called Bedericsworth, it became an object of great veneration, and many reputed miracles were performed over his tomb. Sweyn, king of Denmark, the father of Canute, having plundered and utterly destroyed this monastery by fire, received, it is said, a blow from an invisible hand;^b on which, exclaiming that he was stricken by St. Edmund, he soon after expired. Canute, to expiate his father's crime and pacify the saint, took the monastery under his especial protection, and the present tower is probably a part of his royal munificence.

P.—The Danes then made their appearance very early in England.

A.—During the reign of Brithric in Wessex, a small body of them first landed in that kingdom (787;) and when the magistrate of the place questioned them concerning their enterprise, they killed him and fled to their ships.^c

F.—A characteristic beginning of that long series of piratical attack, plunder, and devastation, by which they retorted upon the Saxons the sufferings which that people a few ages before had inflicted upon the unfortunate Britons.

A.—Even Egbert, though he had united the kingdoms of the heptarchy, and possessed greater power than any former Saxon prince, was not secure from their depredations. In 832 they pillaged the isle of Sheppey, and escaped with impunity; the next year they gained some advantage in a sharp contest at Charmouth, in Dorsetshire; and entering into an alliance

^a Asser.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 10.

^c Sax. Chron.

with the Britons in Cornwall, they made an inroad into Devon, but were totally defeated at Hingesdown. Whilst England remained in a state of anxiety, Egbert, who was alone able to provide against this new evil, unfortunately died^a (838.)

P.—Having thus introduced the Danes to our notice as about to play a conspicuous part in the affairs of England, who were they, and whence did they spring?

A.—This people, the Danes, Normans, or Northmen, appear by the affinity of their language to have been of the same stock as the Saxons; they inhabited the peninsula of Jutland, the isles of the Baltic, and the shores of the Scandinavian continent. Their national appellation, Dane, is probably of the same meaning as the word Thane, a prince; though Saxo Grammaticus very improbably derives it from Dan, one of their kings, who lived 1038 years before Christ. Piracy was their profession: in the spring it was their custom to assail some distant province, ravage the country, and collect the spoil. In the eighth century these sea kings^b (for so were their chiefs then called,) confined their depredations nearly to the northern seas; but soon after, instigated, it is supposed, by some fugitive Saxons, who had fled from the violence of Charlemagne, they assailed at once both the kingdoms of France and England in such numbers, as to fill the inhabitants with terror and amazement.

F.—Indeed the subsequent history of both kingdoms for two centuries is little else than a continual struggle to resist the aggressions of these northern spoilers.

A.—As the Danish vessels were small, no river or creek was secure against their approach. After plundering the inhabitants of the country of their cattle and

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Bartholinus, lib. 2, c. 9.

goods, before there was time for the military force of the district to assemble, the Danes retreated to their ships, and suddenly appeared in a distant quarter. Every part of England was thus kept in perpetual alarm; and the annals of those unhappy times become at once wearisome and repulsive.

P.—Yet notwithstanding this lowering prospect, some gleams of light must occasionally illuminate the horizon, and some scenes and characters occur worthy the attention of the historian.

A.—At the death of Egbert (838,) his son Ethelwolf inherited the throne, but not the talents of his father; he was better qualified for governing a convent than a kingdom. He began his reign according to the absurd custom of those times, by dividing his dominions, delivering over to his eldest son, Athelstan, the counties of Essex, Kent, and Sussex. The incursions of the Danes were now become nearly annual; they marched through and devastated every part of the kingdom; and though frequently encountered in desperate skirmishes, they acquired a settlement in the isle of Thanet. Ethelwolf, however, found opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Rome, and took with him his youngest and favourite son, Alfred, for the purpose of receiving regal unction from the Pope;^a probably with a view to secure his succession hereafter, in preference to the children of his brothers.

F.—This trifling point, it must be confessed, is uncertain; but it has been as much disputed as if it involved the welfare of kingdoms.

A.—The unction is trifling enough, but the point involved is the nature of the succession of the Saxon kings; from this and other instances it would appear that legitimacy was the rule, but liable to be set aside

^a Asser.

when the heir to the vacant throne was considered incompetent, either from extreme youth or weakness, to exercise the regal functions with advantage. The return of Ethelwolf was attended by an unexpected opposition: Athelstan having died in the absence of his father, his next brother, Ethelbald, assumed the government, and concerted with the nobles to exclude Ethelwolf from the throne. A civil war was alone prevented by the facile monarch yielding up to his ambitious son the greater and better part of the kingdom.^a He survived this transaction about two years; but his name is remembered by posterity only as having granted the possession of tithes to the Saxon church.

F.—If this be his only memorable act, it must be allowed that it is one which has been of great importance; from the long resistance of former princes to concede this vast source of wealth to the clergy, we may conclude that they seized the lucky opportunity when a weak monarch and an ignorant and superstitious people, alike depressed by present losses and in terror of future, were equally willing, by any means, to acquire the protection of heaven.

A.—The charter confirming this important grant is still extant.^b The three elder sons of Ethelwolf succeeded to the throne of their father in the following order: Ethelbald (857;) Ethelbert (860;) Ethered (866). During the reign of the last of these princes, Ragnar Lodbrog, a sea king, having constructed ships of a larger size than common, was wrecked on the northern coast of England; heedless of the consequence, he began the usual work of depredation; but his numbers were too few to contend with Ella, the king of Northumberland, who seized the piratical Dane, and confined

^a Asser.

^b Ingulph. p. 17.

him in a dungeon, where he was devoured by snakes. He prophesied in his torments that the "cubs of the boar"^a would avenge the fate of their father.

F.—This Scandinavian chief was equally celebrated as a scald, or poet, as a warrior; he consoled his captivity by composing in verse the various exploits of his life. There is a very ancient ode in "Runic rhyme,"^b purporting to be the death-song of Ragnar Lodbrog; but it is evident that it must have been the composition of some scald, or bard, to celebrate the deeds of his master: it relates an extraordinary adventure of Lodbrog's attacking and killing a dragon, defending himself by the singular contrivance of suffering as much water to freeze upon his garment as would form an impenetrable coat of armour. The ode concludes with this allusion to the serpents:

"Fast to the hereditary end,
To my allotted goal I tend;
Fixed is the viper's mortal harm
Within my heart, his mansion warm;
In the recesses of my breast
The writhing snake has formed his nest.
Yet Odin may in vengeance spread
The bloody scourge o'er Ella's head;
My son's fierce anger at the tale
Shall change from red to deadly pale.
Warn'd from within, break off the lay,
The inviting sisters chide my stay;
By Odin sent, I hear them call,
They bid me to his fatal hall;
With them high-throned, the circling bowl
Of foaming mead shall cheer my soul.
With joy I yield my vital breath,
And laugh in the last pangs of death."^c

A.—The sons of Ragnar soon prepared to fulfil their father's prophecy; and landing in East Anglia, the

^a Saxo.

^b Olaus Wormius de Literatura Runica.

^c Translation by Dr. Downman.

inhabitants of which kingdom supplying their troops with horses, they were enabled to break into Northumberland, and seize Ella, whom they put to death by the most horrible torments. Returning to East Anglia, they murdered St. Edmund, the king, as we have already detailed, and ravaged the monastery upon whose site we are now standing (870).

P.—As Egbert is said to have united the kingdoms of the heptarchy forty years before, how could Northumberland and East Anglia have monarchs of their own at this period?

A.—Egbert, content with the real power, which he thought it prudent to conceal, permitted the kingdoms of Northumberland, Mercia, and East Anglia, to retain their nominal sovereigns; who were notwithstanding entirely dependent upon him, and who in two or three generations became quietly extinct: such kings were Edmund and Ella. The death of Ethered, or Ethelred, for it is spelled both ways (871,) though he left issue, made way for the succession of his brother Alfred, whose celebrated name, yet dear to posterity, appears like an Oasis in the desert, in this rude and uninteresting era.

F.—This monarch has been depicted by Mr. Hume as the model of a perfectly wise and good man, uniting action and speculation in such exact proportion as to form that ideal sage without a blemish, whose character philosophers have been fond of contemplating, but which in real life has elsewhere been rarely, if ever found.

A.—Alfred certainly so far realized the philosophic character, as to represent what Seneca calls a spectacle worthy the attention of the gods, a virtuous man bravely struggling and rising superior to his adverse fortune. Soon after his accession, the Danes continued to pour into England with such an overwhelming torrent, as for

some years to baffle every effort of resistance, and no part of the kingdom was left unsubdued but Wessex. At length Alfred, after having fought eight battles in the course of a single year with some advantage, was compelled to negotiate, and the Danes stipulated to depart the country; when, without seeking a pretence, they suddenly fell upon Alfred's army, put it to the rout, and took possession of Exeter. The king collecting new forces, exerted himself with such vigour, as again to reduce his enemy to extremity; but so urgent was the necessity of his affairs, that he found himself unable to demand better conditions, than that the Danes should quietly settle somewhere in the kingdom, and prevent the intrusion of further ravagers.^a

P.—Having such a recent instance of their perfidy, we scarcely expect to find them faithful in this new engagement.

A.—It was the singular misfortune of this era, that each party of these freebooters, acting without concert or concurrence, considered itself by no means bound by the restrictions agreed to by others. During the execution of this very treaty, a fresh body of Danes, by the celerity of their cavalry, surprised Chippenham, where the king then resided, in the midst of winter; and he escaped from this unexpected attack with the utmost difficulty, without forces, and even without attendants.^b

P.—In truth these bees, swarming from the northern hive, seem seldom to have forgotten the use of their stings.

A.—The terrified Saxons abandoned themselves to despair; some quitted their country, others submitted to their conquerors, but none had courage at this juncture to rally round the king for the defence of their

^a Asser.

^b Sax. Chron.

liberties. Alfred, thus forsaken, was compelled to seek shelter in a mean disguise from the fury of his enemies: he first retired to the cottage of a neatherd: it was in this humble dwelling that the well-known incident occurred of his neglecting to turn the cakes which he had been entrusted to watch whilst baking. Trimming his bow and arrows, his mind became absorbed in the contemplation of his strange fortunes: the good dame, ignorant of the rank of her guest, finding her bread all burnt, failed not to rate him with being very willing always to eat her cakes, though he was thus negligent in toasting them.^a It is not equally well known, that the faithful host, Dunwulf, from his aptitude to learning, which Alfred discovered whilst living under his roof, was some years after promoted to the bishopric of Winchester.^b

F.—There is some resemblance, not only in the extreme reverses of their fortune and subsequent elevation, but in integrity of character, between Alfred and the Swedish monarch, Gustavus Vasa.

A.—Alfred at length finding the search of the Danes to become more remiss, collected some of his followers, and retired to a morass, formed amidst the stagnating waters of the Thone and the Parret,^c now called Athelney, in Somersetshire. During this period a sort of legendary anecdote is recorded, which has little to recommend it, unless its pointing out the genuine benevolence of the monarch. One day, having sent all his attendants out in search of game and fish, he was left alone with the queen: having begun to read, he was disturbed by the voice of a poor man, who with great eagerness begged for something to satisfy his hunger;

^a Asser.

^b Gul. Malmes. de Gest. Pontif.

^c Sax. Chron.

Alfred desired his wife to examine the cupboard, in which she found only one small loaf; this she brought, stating that it would scarcely suffice his servants when they came from fishing. The king however directed her to give half to the poor man, whose name was Nider, trusting, as he said, that God would send more; and he continued to read, till, falling asleep, he was comforted by a remarkable dream, in which St. Cuthbert appeared, and assured him that his restoration to his throne drew near; in token of which his servants would return with a great plenty of fish. This circumstance so happening, the king was encouraged to undertake those noble efforts which restored the lustre of the Saxon diadem.^a

P.—Another proof, supposing the story to be true, that dreams and prophecies are often the cause of their own fulfilment.

A.—In this concealment Alfred was not inactive, making occasional sallies on the Danes, who often felt the vigour of his arm, but were ignorant of the quarter whence the blow proceeded. At length a fortunate circumstance enabled him to leave his retreat in safety. Oddune, earl of Devonshire, being besieged in his castle of Kinwith, resolved to prevent the necessity of submitting, by making an unexpected sally; this he performed one morning before day-break, with such success as to kill Hubba, a celebrated leader, and obtain possession of the *reafen*, or raven,^b an enchanted banner, to which the Danes attached much importance. This mysterious standard was woven in one noontide by the three daughters of the deceased Danish chief, Ragnar Lod-brog: if it appeared to flap its wings in battle, it was a sure omen of victory; if it hung motionless in the air, it anticipated nothing but defeat.

^a Sim. Dunelm Vita St. Cuthbert.

^b Asser.

P.—The Danes then had only to fight on a windy day: however the loss of this magical emblem could not but affect the minds of superstitious barbarians.

A.—Alfred resolved to inspect the situation of the enemy himself before he attempted to assemble his subjects in arms. Assuming the disguise of a harper, he entered the Danish camp; and passing unsuspected through every quarter, gained possession of their secrets: he remarked their supine security, their contempt of the English, and their neglect of military discipline. Encouraged by these appearances, he sent intelligence to his most powerful subjects, and summoned them to attend with their warlike followers on the borders of Selwood Forest, in Devon. The English, worn out by the insolence and oppression of the enemy, on the appointed day joyfully resorted to their prince, received him with shouts of applause, and, “never satisfied with seeing,” entreated that he would lead them to liberty and vengeance.*

P.—Of such enthusiasm it is to be presumed that Alfred was too wise a man not to take immediate advantage.

A.—He conducted his army to Eddington; and availing himself of his knowledge of the weakness of the Danish camp, he directed his attack against its most unguarded quarter. The Danes, astonished to find that Alfred was again at the head of an army, were soon routed with great slaughter; and those who escaped, retreating to some neighbouring fortification, presently offered to submit. Alfred proposed to re-people East Anglia, now become depopulated, with the Danish leader Guthrum and his followers; but required that they should give him a pledge of their sincerity by

* Asser. Sax. Chron.

consenting to embrace Christianity. The greater part received baptism, and settled peaceably in their new quarters (880).^a

P.—Did they then at once relinquish their old habits of licentiousness and perfidy?

A.—Alfred so well followed up the benefits of this victory by his policy and vigour, that he kept the Danes within due limits; the more turbulent passed over to the continent, and the remainder were gradually incorporated with the English. With admirable greatness of mind he put both people into the same equality in the eye of the law, the surest source of concord; and such was the happy result of his efforts, that except by one trivial incursion, the kingdom for twelve years remained undisturbed.^b

F.—How striking is the effect produced by the ascendancy of one powerful mind!

A.—At length (893) Hastings, a celebrated Danish chief, arrived on the coast of Kent with a fleet of three hundred and thirty sail, landed his troops at Aplemore, on the Rother, and would under a weak government have thrown every thing into the former confusion; but Alfred, with his characteristic vigour, chased the Danes wherever they appeared,^c which indeed was in various and distant quarters; and one of his leaders had the good fortune to make the wife and daughters of Hastings prisoners, whom the king generously released, on condition that Hastings would depart the kingdom, and not return; which promise that ferocious chief probably fulfilled, as he is heard of no more in England, though it cost Alfred much trouble before his followers could be entirely subdued. After restoring tranquillity in every part of his dominions, this great monarch died,

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Asser.

^c Sax. Chron.

at the age of fifty-one,^a in the full possession of that security and greatness which his virtues deserved (901).

P.—Notwithstanding his continued success, I am not aware that Alfred stands high as a military commander.

A.—Of his activity we have sufficient proof, since in the course of his life he fought no less than fifty-six battles in person; of his generalship indeed little is known, as in those days of desultory warfare hard blows alone decided the contest. One of his stratagems is recorded; when the Danes, sailing up the river Lee, fortified themselves at Hertford, he devised a plan to render their fleet useless,^b by dividing the stream into three channels, which manœuvre left their vessels dry; and it is thought that the noble meadow now stretching between Hertford and Bow was occasioned by this contrivance.

F.—It is rather to the wisdom of Alfred's civil government than to his military arrangements, however well planned and executed, that we must seek the cause of his lasting renown.

A.—The institutions of Alfred have always been the boast of the English nation, for so it began to be called in the reign of this monarch. But his first and most pressing care was to secure the safety of his people; and this he effected by settling a national militia, ordering all his subjects of proper age to be armed and registered, assigning them a regular rotation of duty, each man to be ready in case of a sudden emergency: and sensible that the most effectual mode of repelling the depredations of piratical enemies, was by attacking them on their own element, he provided a naval force, which had been so unaccountably neglected by his

^a Asser.

^b Sax. Chron.

Saxon predecessors.^a And though Alfred was obliged at first to man his fleet with Frisians and other foreigners, he became at length master of the ocean, and gave the example of those glorious wooden walls, which on so many occasions have since raised England to its transcendant height of power and greatness.

F.—In estimating the benefit we must not overlook the intolerable evils which these measures removed: the Danes had ravaged the whole kingdom, had burnt and plundered London and various other cities, and being Pagans, spared neither age, nor sex, nor religious profession; indeed the monasteries, being well provided with booty, were peculiarly the objects of their attack. The Abbess of Coldingham, in order to screen her nuns from outrage, persuaded them to cut off their noses and upper lips. This notable expedient preserved their honour, but cost them their lives; the Danes beholding, contrary to their expectations, such horrid visages, set fire to the convent, and cast the unfortunate nuns into the flames.^b Another proof of their habitual barbarity may be drawn from the circumstance of one Oliver, a famous pirate, having acquired the nickname of Barnakall, or child-preserver, because he denied his followers the diversion of tossing infants on their spears.^c

P.—You mention London as being one of the cities burnt and plundered by the Danes, yet for a long period previous it does not appear to have been the seat of any important transaction.

A.—London is not noticed by any writer from the year 616 to 764, though from its happy situation it must always have continued a place of great commerce and importance; yet the Mercian kings, in whose dominions it was situated, seem not to have chosen it for their

^a Asser.

^b Mat. Westmon.

^c Bartholinus, lib. 2, c. 9.

place of residence. Alfred rebuilt it after its late conflagration; and by appointing a regular meeting of the Wittena-gemot, or states of the kingdom, to be held there twice in the year, first made it the metropolis of England.

P.—Of what class of persons did that assembly consist?

A.—It is agreed that the bishops and abbots were an essential part; and also the aldermen, or governors of counties, who in the Danish times were often termed Jarls, or Earls: but there appears besides to have been an order of men called Wites, which indeed gave a name to the assembly. Disputes have arisen as to the meaning of this description of persons: some indiscreet advocates of popular government have affected to consider them in the light of representatives of the boroughs; but that opinion is quite untenable, as from the thinness of the population, the low state of commerce, and consequently the general poverty of the kingdom, artificers and tradesmen had not even become of sufficient importance to form a separate class: and in the continental governments established by the Franks, springing from the same origin as the Saxons, it is universally admitted that the commons had no share.^a

F.—Other antiquaries maintain that the wites meant the judges, or men learned in the law.

A.—That class is included among the aldermen and bishops; consequently we must rather look for an explanation of the term to the great thanes, or chief proprietors of land, wite meaning powerful as well as wise.

P.—In the apprehension of many, the epithets are still synonymous.

^a Mezerai. Fauchet, *Antiq. de France*.

A.—How large an estate gave a qualification to sit in the Wittena-gemot is uncertain, though it is commonly thought not less than forty hides, containing between four and five thousand acres. This assembly existed in all the Saxon kingdoms; and its consent was necessary to the enacting of new laws, and to the ratification of the chief acts of government; it was also the supreme court of justice.

P.—The Wittena-gemot then resembled our House of Lords; but the people having there no natural protectors, in what did the boasted liberty of the Anglo-Saxons consist?

F.—The very existence of such a council was a guarantee against a government purely despotic; but that the Saxons paid attention to what has been since invidiously termed the rights of men as individuals, is an imaginary supposition, personal slavery having always existed among them. The government was clearly aristocratical; consequently we are not to look for those checks and balances which distinguish the modern constitution of Britain: in this sense that beautiful system was certainly not to be found in the woods of Germany;^a the rude inhabitants of the Hercynian forest enjoying that kind of freedom only, which a war-like people with arms in their hands, in an incipient state of society, will always retain.

A.—With the Anglo-Saxons the proprietors of land alone possessed any sort of political power; but the degree of personal liberty which that class enjoyed was considerable, they being not only exempt from the feudal burdens afterwards imposed by the Norman Conqueror, but happily ignorant of the weight of modern taxation. This blessing of freedom was chiefly secured

^a Montesquieu.

by the institution of the hundred and county courts, where the freeholders assembled twice a year. In the latter the bishop and the alderman presided, and the causes were determined, as it would seem, by acclamation rather than by a majority of voices; but the attendance of all the freeholders being at length found troublesome, a portion was selected for the purpose, and hence the origin of juries; but the mode of their appointment and the method of trying causes remain in great obscurity.

F.—In the beginning of the last century, a notion was hinted at by Dr. Hickes,^a a high-flying nonjuror, that juries had no existence at all amongst the Anglo-Saxons, but that we are indebted for their introduction to Henry the Second; and this doctrine seems incautiously to have been admitted by some subsequent historians, in their rage, as it appears to me, of starting new opinions, however paradoxical.

A.—Our own sages of the law have always adhered to the common tenet; and as it is uncontested that with all the Teutonic nations the essence of a jury, the *parium judicium*, or trial by one's peers, existed from the earliest times, I see no reason to adopt the Doctor's notion; though the number of twelve jurymen, and their unanimity, may be considered as of later establishment.

F.—In the county and hundred courts was the democratical part of the Anglo-Saxon constitution to be found, which secured to the people the due administration of the laws, and protected them against the oppression of the great. And here also we discover something of the elements of a popular election, in the appointment of the sheriffs, who were commonly chosen by

^a Thesaurus, vol. 2.

the people, that is, the land owners; which practice indeed continued after the conquest.

A.—We must not attribute, as is done by some historians, the institution of these minor tribunals to Alfred, as they existed at an earlier period; though he anew regulated and maintained their authority: and for the same reason the division of the kingdom into counties and hundreds is not to be considered as originating with him, though he improved the former distribution; but the more minute subdivision of the hundreds into tithings may be viewed as his work. These tithings consisted each of ten households; and in those days of scanty population they occupied often a considerable space of land; each householder became surety for the good behaviour of his neighbours, and for his own family, no person being suffered to remain who did not register himself in some tithing. Thus a system of exact police was established, well calculated to restrain the extreme licentiousness and disorder of the times, though but little in accordance with a more advanced period of society.

F.—The strict regard which he paid to the administration of justice is one of the distinguishing merits of Alfred; he severely punished all malversation in the judges, many of whom were actually executed for abuses in their office.^a

A.—Not only to the administration but to the substance of the law itself, was the care of Alfred extended. By collecting the best of those laws formerly promulgated by Ethelbert, Ina, and Offa, he digested a complete code; which though now lost, except a fragment, is said to have been in existence so late as the reign of Edward IV. This work is generally deemed the origin

^a *Miroir des Justices.*

of many of those maxims which constitute the “common law” of England. The punishment of death was rarely inflicted ; indeed nothing can be more remarkable than amidst a ferocious age, the extreme mildness of spirit in which these laws are dictated.

F.—Unless it be the contrast by which in a refined age the sanguinary code, or rather mass of crudity, forming the criminal law of Britain has been since distinguished.

A.—Midnight assassination for purposes of plunder was capitally punished by a law of Alfred. Those violences which admitted composition seem to have been inflicted in private feuds ; and if so, what were they but a sort of duelling on a more enlarged scale. It is remarkable how much the principle of pecuniary compensation pervades the whole system of the Anglo-Saxon laws. The effect of Alfred’s cares was wonderful : robberies and iniquities of all kinds were so much repressed, that it is said he hung up golden bracelets near the highways, and no man dared to touch them.^a

P.—Thus far you have spoken only of Alfred’s active virtues as a warrior and legislator ; but is he not equally renowned as a scholar and a sage ?

A.—His love of letters and encouragement of learned men were remarkable, and proceeded not more from policy than from sincere attachment to literature ; which inclination was first excited by the recital of some Saxon poems, in which his mother delighted.^b Till this period his education had been so much neglected, that at the age of twelve years Alfred was unable even to read. Finding the monasteries destroyed, the libraries burned, and the monks butchered or dispersed, he established schools every where for the

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 4.

^b Asser.

instruction of his people; of which you will say they were much in want; as he complains that he knew not one person at his accession south of the Thames who could so much as interpret the Latin service,^a and very few in the north. He founded, or at least restored, a school or university at Oxford;^b he invited over the most celebrated scholars from all parts of Europe; and judging that example would best promote his views of improvement, he wrote several works, and translated others into the Saxon tongue; amongst these were *Boethius de Consolatione*,^c that great favourite of the middle ages; Æsop's Fables; Orosius and Bede's Histories. Alfred too was a poet, and the royal verses are at least equal, if they do not exceed, any other Saxon poetry, whether it be that of the monk Cœdmon, a renowned bard, who died in 684; or that of Aldhelm, bishop of Sherburne, equally celebrated, who died 709. Nor were the cares of Alfred confined to the liberal arts; the mechanical met with equal encouragement; numerous workmen were employed in rebuilding the ruined cities and convents, whilst commerce and navigation so much increased and flourished, that even the productions of India found their way into his harbours.

P.—These various undertakings must have required an extensive revenue to accomplish.

A.—Its amount has not been ascertained, but it arose chiefly from his demesne lands, which were large; and it was managed with admirable order, and distributed into distinct departments of expense. Alfred too was equally an economist of his time, which he divided into three equal portions: one was employed in sleep,

^a Preface to the Saxon Version of the Psalms.

^b Asser.

^c Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 4.

exercise, and diet; another in the despatch of business; and the third in study and devotion. That he might more exactly measure the hours, he made use of wax tapers secured in lanterns of transparent horn; an expedient suited to supply the want of clocks, then unknown in England. But the great quality which distinguishes this prince above all others, was his sincere and constant love for his people, which indeed they repaid with the most affectionate veneration; in all his regulations he preserved the most sacred regard for their liberties; and in his will is found that memorable sentiment, that he wished them “to be free as their own thoughts;”^a a declaration well worthy of him who in every respect is deservedly esteemed the Father of his Country.

F.—I am afraid that you construe this noble sentiment rather too widely, as it may be doubted whether the expression is not referable merely to the legatees of Alfred, and not to the English people at large.

P.—As unattainable perfection operates rather as a discouragement than an example, what defects formed the shade of Alfred’s splendid portrait?

A.—On this ground I have really taken some trouble in the search, but without much success. A monkish writer, Wallingford,^b who lived in the thirteenth century, has insinuated that at the beginning of his reign Alfred indulged in licentious habits; but as he married early, and was afflicted with a painful but unascertained disease, I set this down as a mere slander; and yet such an allusion is made by his friend and biographer Asserius.^c He was once sharply reproved by his kinsman, St. Neot, for a too great austerity and haughtiness of manner, and carelessness of his duties, which it is

^a See Alfred’s Will in Asser.

^b Chron. p. 555.

^c Page 32.

thought occasioned that total desertion of his subjects which took place after the Danes had surprised Chippenham. These however were the faults of early life, which the same authority^a acknowledges were afterwards amended.

P.—As every thing relating to so incomparable a character is interesting, where was Alfred born, and where was he buried?

A.—Wantage, a small town in Berkshire, claims the honour of his birth; and nature, as if desirous that so bright a production of her skill should be set in the fairest light, bestowed on him every bodily accomplishment, vigour of limbs, dignity of form, with a pleasing, engaging, and open countenance. He was buried in the old monastery at Winchester; but the monks of that establishment having some pique against his memory, said that his “corpse walked.”^b It was therefore removed to the new monastery in the same city, of Alfred’s own foundation. In the year 1520, his bones, with those of several other Saxon kings, being put into leaden coffins, inscribed with the name of each, were by Bishop Fox^c again removed to the cathedral; where they rested in peace till, in 1642, the parliamentary soldiers under Sir William Waller broke into the church, mingled all these ashes together, and threw them into the air, an act of desecration to be remembered with abhorrence.^d

F.—Such resplendent merit as Alfred’s must tend to place the reign of his successor in somewhat a disadvantageous light.

A.—A succession of valiant and active monarchs, seemed rather to confirm the excellence of Alfred’s institutions: his son Edward the Elder, being the first

^a Asser.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 4.

^c Speed, Chron. 945.

^d Hearne, Notes on Spelman’s Life of Alfred.

of that name who sat on the English throne, was a prince, though in genius and erudition inferior to his father, yet equalled him in military talents, for which he had great occasion. Ethelward^a his cousin disputing the crown, had called in the Danes to support his claim; but though the rebel fell in a battle against the Kentish men, yet Edward's wars with the Danes continued during the greater part of his reign, and in which, be it remembered to the credit of the fair sex, he was ably assisted by his sister Ethelfleda, who governed Mercia: he died 925, and was succeeded by his son Athelstan, whose reign was equally vigorous and successful as that of his father, which indeed it much resembled.

F.—Athelstan may claim the merit of having first discovered, that the real foundation of the power of England was founded in commerce, by enacting the remarkable law, that a merchant who had made three long sea voyages on his own account, should be admitted to the rank of a thane or gentleman.^b

A.—The new king encountered an opposition from Anlaf, a powerful Dane settled in Northumberland, who was assisted by Constantine, king of Scotland; both of these prince she totally subdued at Brunsbury, chiefly by the valour of Turketul, the English chancellor: this victory is much boasted of by historians as well as poets, in extraordinary terms of rapture and bombast;^c the Scottish monarch being reduced to preserve his crown by the most humble submissions.

F.—Indeed they were so humble, that it is a matter of doubt whether Constantine were not compelled to relinquish the sovereignty of the countries between the rivers Tweed and Forth, or at least to hold them

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Wilkins, Leges Sax. p. 71.

^c Sax. Chron.

in homage of Athelstan.^a This opinion the Scottish writers, Hume amongst the rest, are very desirous of refuting; but I do not very well see, if the testimony of our ancient annalists is to be esteemed valid on other points, why it should be rejected on this.

A.—A story is preserved by historians, that Anlaf employed the same artifice formerly practised by Alfred, of entering the enemy's camp disguised as a minstrel: having played before Athelstan, he received a handsome reward, but his pride induced him to bury the money, as he supposed unperceived: a soldier, however, who observed the occurrence, carried intelligence to the king, who blamed him for not giving earlier information; the soldier replying, that having formerly sworn fealty to Anlaf, he could not betray his ancient master, Athelstan had the generosity to commend the man's principles, but judged it prudent to remove his own station in the camp; and a bishop arriving on the same evening with a reinforcement, occupied the vacant spot. The morning showed the prudence of Athelstan's precaution; Anlaf had broken into the camp, and slew the bishop and his attendants in the dark, before they had sufficient time to make any defence.^b

P.—However satisfied with the escape of the king, we cannot but feel a little commiseration for the unsuspecting bishop.

F.—It was during this contest with Anlaf that the renowned Guy of Warwick flourished, whose various memorials are still preserved in that magnificent specimen of a baronial residence, Warwick Castle, and in its neighbourhood: and though Guy is one of those heroes of romance, whose existence is of very doubtful

^a Hoveden, 422. Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 6.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 6.

credibility; yet his fame has exceeded that of most English warriors, from the circumstance of his having been the subject of many metrical compositions, which were sung by the minstrels in the halls of the barons at certain festivals, to large and applauding audiences.

A.—Guy was a genuine knight errant; he killed in due order a dragon, a wild boar, and the monstrous cow of Dunsmore; his Dulcinea was the beautiful Phillis, whom he afterwards married, and to advance whose fame he fought at various tilts and tournaments with admirable valour and success. But the deed which has eternized his reputation occurred in the decline of life, his defeat of Colbrand, the Danish giant, the champion of Anlaf; that chieftain having advanced to Winchester from the north, proposed to decide the fate of the English crown by a single combat.

P.—But Athelstan having present possession, surely such a request was not very reasonable.

A.—We must not expect to find reason and romance united. Athelstan, much troubled in mind that he knew no competitor worthy to engage the Danish soldier, was comforted by a vision, which directed him to rise early in the morning and watch the pilgrims who might enter the city; amongst them would appear a venerable man, barefoot, with his head uncovered, and upon it a chaplet of roses. At the hour appointed the king espies such a personage, but of wan complexion, and having a beard of great length; Athelstan approaching him, desired some conversation; but the palmer replied, that he must depart to perform penance in the church for his sins: the king then exclaiming, “You must fight with the wicked Colbrand;” the stranger answered, “Ah! my Lord, I am not in a condition to take arms, being feeble

and worn with travel; where are your stout and hardy soldiers?"

P.—This must needs lead to a recognition.

A.—Not immediately. Athelstan replied, "Some of them are dead, and others absent in the Holy Land, especially one valorous knight, the Earl of Warwick, called Guy; had he been present, this challenge would soon be accepted;" and as he spoke the tears fell from his eyes. The palmer besought the king not to grieve, as for the honour of God and the blessed Virgin he would undertake the task. Accordingly on the appointed day, well armed and equipped, and mounted on the king's best charger, he meets the terrible Colbrand. All contests of chivalry resemble each other so much, that it is sufficient to state that Colbrand by a single blow struck off the head of Guy's horse; but after a long and furious encounter victory declared for the earl; Colbrand having lost his hand, fainted with the loss of blood.

P.—These circumstances plainly bespeak the date of the legend, which must have been after the crusade.

A.—The unknown palmer at length disclosed himself to the king, but under a promise of inviolable secresy, as he meant to continue in his pilgrim's weeds, and spend the remainder of his life in devotion. Guy then repaired to Warwick, and dwelt with a hermit, who dying soon after, left his vacant cell to be tenanted by the earl. After an occupation of two years, Guy, finding his end approach, sent by a trusty messenger his wedding-ring to his countess, stating that on her arrival at his cell she would find him lying dead in the chapel; adding the comfortable assurance, that in fifteen days she would herself follow him; all which accordingly came to pass.^a

^a Dugdale, Warwick, p. 374.

P.—As some excavations on the banks of the Avon, near Warwick, are still called Guy's Cliff, no argument would invalidate in that neighbourhood the truth of the story.

A.—Dugdale, the grave antiquary, relates,^a that an earl of Warwick of the great Beauchamp family, travelling into the east about the year 1410, was hospitably received at Jerusalem by the soldan's lieutenant; who hearing that he was descended from Guy of Warwick, whose story he had read in his own language, invited the earl to his palace, and royally feasted him, presenting him with jewels of great value, and also with clothes of silk and gold for his servants.

P.—Is not Bevis of Southampton another worthy of a similar class with Guy; he also having a local memorial in Bevis Mount, near that town, and his sword being kept as a relic in Arundel Castle?

A.—Bevis, if ever such a person existed, flourished more than a century later than Guy, about the period of the Norman invasion; he was equally a genuine knight errant, but his exploits being chiefly performed abroad, have no relation to English history.

F.—The original source whence the stories of these worthies is derived, is a very ancient romance in old English verse, thus alluded to by Chaucer:

“ Men speken of romance of price,
Of Horne Childe and Ippotis,
Of Bevis and Sir Guy.”

On the north front of the Bar-gate at Southampton, built A. D. 1339, are painted two figures on each side of the gateway, representing Sir Bevis, styled of Southampton, knight; and Ascupart, a conquered giant, as recorded by the following couplet:

^a Baronage, vol. 1, p. 243.

“ Bevis conquered Ascupart, and after slew the boar ;
And then he crossed beyond the seas to combat with the Moor.”^a

A.—King Athelstan, though a great monarch, is charged with many acts of cruelty ; one of which was evinced in his treatment of Edwin, his younger brother, now arriving at man’s estate, and suspected of ambitious designs. This unfortunate youth, it is said, was embarked in a small boat with one attendant, without provisions, and turned adrift on the ocean ; when, overcome with despair, he leaped overboard : the attendant survived, and came safely to land. Athelstan having accidentally slipped with one foot on the pavement of his hall, and hastily recovering himself with the other, the king’s butler incautiously mentioned the proverb, “ Thus should one brother help another ;” which ill-timed allusion occasioning the king’s resentment, caused the immediate execution of the speaker. This very able prince soon after died (941,) having reigned sixteen years. He was of small stature, with yellow hair, which he wore in ringlets, entwined with golden threads.^b

F.—The Saxon monarchs seem to have been a short-lived race, scarcely any surviving the middle age.

A.—Such was the fact ; whether we are to ascribe it to the general habits of intemperance with the Saxons, or to their coarse diet without vegetables ; yet there are instances on the other hand of extreme longevity, particularly of the monks : the records of Crowland Abbey exhibit at one time the following ages of five of its inmates : Father Clarenbald, 168 ; Father Swarling, 142 ; and three others 115.^c The immediate successors of Athelstan did not reach even the middle age : his bro-

^a Antiquarian Repertory, vol. 3, p. 195.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 6.

^c Ingulph. Hist. p. 505.

ther Edmund was quite a youth when he ascended the throne: of a brave and active disposition, he chastised the Northumbrian Danes, ever prone to disturbance; and he conquered Cumberland, transferring it from the Britons to Malcolm, king of Scotland, on condition that he should do homage for it, and protect the north from the irruptions of the Danes (941).^a

F.—In consequence of this transfer, that county was continued as a fief to the kingdom of Scotland till it was restored in the time of William the Conqueror, occasionally giving the name of prince to the heir apparent of the Scottish throne. The readers of Shakspeare are aware of this circumstance: “Know,” says the gracious Duncan, in *Macbeth*,

“ We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland.”

A.—The death of Edmund was truly unfortunate. One day feasting with his nobles at Pucklechurch, in Gloucestershire, a notorious robber, named Leolf, who had been sentenced to banishment, entered the hall and seated himself at one of the tables; refusing to retire, the king, enraged, leaped upon him and seized him by the hair: others relate, that Leolf quarrelling with those about him, the king interfered to put an end to the fray, when the ruffian, reduced to extremity, drew his dagger and gave Edmund a furious thrust, which was instantly mortal. The murderer was immediately cut to pieces by the exasperated companions of the king (946).^b

P.—The young and brave will certainly sympathize with such an undeserved catastrophe.

A.—The children of Edmund being yet in infancy,

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 7.

^b Ibid.

he was succeeded by his brother Edred, a prince not unwarlike nor unfit for active life. Like his predecessor, he was compelled to repress the turbulent Danes in the north, who seemed always to consider the accession of a new king as a favourable opportunity to shake off the English yoke. But the principal event of his reign is the appearance of the celebrated St. Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury; the first complete specimen in England of that species of Romish churchman who, concealing an immeasurable ambition under a veil of sanctity, obtained the highest authority in the state.

P.—Does not such an ascendancy imply a great degree of weakness in the monarch?

A.—Not always; for though Dunstan began his career under Edred, a prince imbued with much superstition, he completed his success under Edgar, whose penetrating and politic understanding none can question. The acquirements of Dunstan were so much beyond those of the age in which he lived, as to give rise to the report of his recourse to magic. Having incurred the displeasure of the court, he judged that a profession of superior mortification and austerity was best calculated to retrieve his fortunes and promote his ambitious views; he secluded himself therefore entirely from the world, and built a cell so small that he could neither stand erect in it, nor stretch out his limbs during his repose; and here he employed himself in continual acts of devotion.^a

F.—This I suppose was the cause of the devil's particular enmity to this good man.

A.—No person that I recollect, not even St. Anthony himself, was more exposed to the temptations, or became more renowned for his contests and victory over the

^a Osborn, Vita S. Dunst. in Anglia Sacra.

prince of darkness than Dunstan. Early in life, having recovered from a fit of sickness by the interposition of an angel, who came down from heaven in a dreadful storm, with a medicine that restored the patient to perfect health in an instant, as Dunstan was running with all speed to the church to return thanks, he was met by the devil, surrounded by a multitude of black dogs, which obstructed his passage; but the saint brandishing his stick and pronouncing the sacred name, the devil and his dogs at once took to flight.^a Another time Dunstan was tempted by Satan in the form of a beautiful young woman; but his most celebrated exploit is that by which he relieved himself from all further importunity. One night as he was busily working at his forge (for he was a great mechanic,) the devil in the shape of a man, thrust his head in at the window, desiring that something might be made for him. Dunstan gave no answer, on which the devil began to swear and talk obscenely, thus betraying the lurking fiend; upon which the saint, taking his tongs, which were red hot, out of the fire, seized the devil with them by the nose, and made him roar so loud as to awake and terrify all the neighbourhood for many miles round.^b

P.—Could persons be found who gave credit to such monstrous absurdities?

A.—They procured to Dunstan a reputation which no real piety or virtue could possibly have bestowed. The great point on which he laboured to secure his authority was the dispossessing of the secular clergy, who were often married men, from the monasteries, and filling them with regular monks, who paid implicit obedience to the see of Rome, now endeavouring to establish the discipline of St. Benedict, which incul-

^a Osbern, Vita S. Dunst. in Anglia Sacra.

^b Ibid.

cated seclusion from the world, and the most inviolable chastity; but in this career he was checked by the death of Edred (955).^a

F.—This endeavour of the Romish church to counteract one of the strongest instincts of nature could not but be attended with the most violent commotions.

A.—It required no less than three centuries before celibacy could be imposed upon the clergy at large. Dunstan, by setting himself as the head of a party, supported by the whole power of the Pope, could not fail of acquiring vast influence; and it was soon seen how effectual an engine in his hands was the profession of monkish austerity. Edwy, the son of King Edmund, a youth ~~of~~^{Not} the most beautiful figure, had now succeeded to the crown, at the age of sixteen; but having married the lovely Elgiva, who was related to him within the prohibited degrees, he incurred the displeasure of Dunstan, and indeed of his other counsellors. On the day of his coronation, whilst the nobility, feasting in the great hall, were indulging in riot and intemperance, the king retired to the queen's apartments: the assembly, dissatisfied with his absence, deputed Kinsey, bishop of Lichfield, and Dunstan, to solicit his return. These prelates burst unceremoniously into the chamber, where they found the king, with Elgiva and her mother; when upbraiding the ladies in terms of indecorous severity, they forced the diadem, which was lying on the ground, upon the head of Edwy, and dragged him by main force from the arms of the queen back to the banquet.^b

P.—No female could be expected to forgive such an insult.

A.—By the queen's instigation, Dunstan was accused of malversation in his office of treasurer during

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 7.

the late king's reign, and was speedily banished.^a His party however were not inactive: Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, having poisoned the minds of the people with declamations against the impiety of the king and queen, sent into the palace a party of soldiers, who seized the too beautiful Elgiva, and seared her face with a red-hot iron. After this cruel transaction, she was doomed to perpetual exile in Ireland; and Edwy, finding it vain to resist, consented to a divorce; but Elgiva at length having recovered her beauty, found means to escape; and still considering the king as her husband, was flying to his protection, when she was intercepted by Odo, and barbarously ham-strung; from which treatment suffering the most acute torments, she soon expired.^b

P.—Such revolting barbarity gives no very favourable interpretation to the motives of Dunstan.

A.—The odium of the transaction must rest upon Odo; but it is confessed that considerable uncertainty attends the whole story: some authorities representing the queen as an abandoned woman, and the king during his whole reign as totally forgetful of the duties and decency of his station.

F.—Whether the lady were married or not, such cruelty can in no way be justified; and as the king early declared in favour of the secular clergy against the regular, his character has been exposed by the monks to the greatest obloquy.

A.—They certainly contrived to get him excommunicated;^c and they placed his brother Edgar, a boy of fourteen years of age, over the greater part of the kingdom. Edwy soon after died, either by violence or from

^a Eadmer, p. 257.

^b Osbern.

^c Biompton, p. 263.

grief (959:)^a the new sovereign, with his brother's fate before his eyes, resolved to follow opposite counsels, and patronized Dunstan and the monks. Edgar, who soon discovered an excellent capacity for government, was the most fortunate of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs; he appointed a powerful fleet,^b which he divided into three squadrons, for the defence of the coast; and being constantly prepared both by land and sea, he escaped all attack from the Danes during his whole reign of sixteen years, a circumstance quite unparalleled. He reduced the neighbouring princes to submission; and as a proof of his superiority, when residing at Chester, and purporting to go by water to the monastery of St. John the Baptist, he was rowed by eight tributary princes in his barge on the river Dee.^c

P.—And who were these royal watermen?

A.—Kenneth, king of Scotland; Malcolm, prince of Cumberland; Macchus, prince of Anglesey and of the Isles; and five Welsh princes, whose names are not worth repeating. Edgar, in the fulness of his pride, exclaimed, "Let my successors, the kings of England, boast when they shall perform the like."

F.—This exploit has been sometimes adduced as an example of vain glory; yet there is in it something which the French would call *superbe*, and which takes strong hold of the imagination. The Scottish historians are very unwilling to admit that their king, Kenneth, was one of the rowers.

A.—Edgar is also remembered by an incident of gallantry, which has often been related, and which forms the subject of an English tragedy of some merit. Orgar, earl of Devonshire, had a daughter, Elfrida, the

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 7.

^b Higden, Polychron.

^c Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 8.

renown of whose beauty, though she had never been at court, was spread through the nation. The king, ever alive to reports of this nature, deputed his minister, Athelwold, to visit the family, and judge whether her charms were answerable to their high reputation; the favourite at once became deeply enamoured with Elfrida, whose beauty he found exceeded the report, and he resolved to sacrifice his fidelity towards his master to this new passion. He told Edgar that the great wealth and high rank of the lady had alone been the ground of the admiration paid to her; but though her person was homely, these qualities would make her, did it please the king, an advantageous match for himself. Edgar, happy to advance the fortune of his friend, assisted by his recommendation to conclude the marriage.

P.—It is impossible to anticipate from such treachery any thing but misfortune.

A.—The truth soon became known to Edgar, who, concealing his resentment, told Athelwold that it was his intention to pay him a visit at his castle and be introduced to his bride. The conscious minister hastened home, and, compelled to disclose the secret to Elfrida, entreated that, if she possessed any regard for her own honour or for her husband's life, she would conceal that fatal beauty which had betrayed his integrity. The lady promised compliance, but nothing was further from her intentions: she appeared before the king with every attraction of dress and manner that nature or art could bestow, and thus excited in his bosom in their utmost vehemence the passions of love and revenge. Under the pretence of hunting, Edgar seduced the unfortunate husband into a wood, and mortally stabbing him, in a short time espoused Elfrida.^a

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 2.

F.—Mankind have not been disposed to treat this action with excessive blame, the provocation having been seldom surpassed.

A.—The natural son of Athelwold happening to pass near, and viewing the dead body of his father, Edgar sternly asked him how he liked the game? The youth calmly replied, that whatever pleased the king must not displease him.^a This courtly answer on so moving an occasion surprized Edgar, and gave him a strong affection for the young man, whose interest he studiously promoted. Some other gallantries of this monarch were of a more criminal nature than his love for Elfrida: he once broke into a convent, and carried off by force a young devotee;^b at another time, being suddenly smitten with the charms of a nobleman's daughter, he insisted that she should be sacrificed the same night to his passion; the mother of the young lady, to avoid becoming a party to the dishonour of her family, secretly substituted a waiting-maid in her place, who became Edgar's favourite mistress till his marriage with Elfrida.^c

F.—As the monks represent Edgar to be a great saint, which he certainly was not, as well as a wise and politic king, which he as certainly was, we may conclude that it was not merely the immorality of his predecessor Edwy which excited their hostility.

A.—During his reign England was much resorted to by foreigners, who, it is said, corrupted the simplicity of the natives, by introducing habits of intemperance; to correct which, Edgar regulated the modes of good fellowship, by appointing metal pins to be placed at certain distances in the drinking cup, beyond which it was not allowed to swallow at a draught.^d This

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 8. ^b Ibid. ^c Ibid. ^d Flo. Wigorn, A.D. 973.

prince having never been engaged in battle, obtained the name of the peaceable. He had a great antipathy to wolves, who, like the old Britons, escaping pursuit in England, sought shelter amongst the mountains of Wales. Edgar, by imposing on the Welsh an annual tribute of three hundred heads of those destructive animals, in four years extirpated the race.^a

F.—Though Edgar was a prince of slender figure and small stature, his courage was never questioned. There is an allusion to these particulars, in a story told by Camden:^b Kenneth, king of Scots, having said at table, that it stood not with the honour of the princes of this isle that so many provinces should be subject to that *Dandiprat*^c Edgar, the speech soon reached the ears of the English monarch; who taking occasion one day to draw Kenneth privately into a wood, as though he meant to disclose some important secret, offered him the choice of two swords, saying, “Now we are alone you may try your manhood; now it may appear who should be subject to the other:” but Kenneth, dismayed at this appeal, desired his pardon and obtained it.

P.—“And dwell such mighty souls in little men.”

A.—Edgar died in the thirty-third year of his age (775,) and with him died the Saxon glory: he was succeeded by his son Edward, but not without opposition, as his step-mother Elfrida attempted to raise her own son Ethelred, then only seven years of age, to the vacant throne; but the cause of Edward being espoused by Dunstan, he was crowned, and the whole kingdom submitted.^d

F.—As Dunstan was the instrument of the king's exaltation, he had a favourable opportunity of pur-

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 6.

^b Camden's Remains.

^c Homuncio is the term used by Gul. Malmesb.

^d Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 9.

suing his design of expelling the secular clergy from the monasteries.

A.—Which he by no means neglected. He summoned synods, in which every art was practised to influence the consent of the members: on one occasion when the assembly were about to decide contrary to the wishes of Dunstan, a loud voice proceeded from a crucifix, built into the wall, crying out, “Do not do that, do not do that; you judged right formerly, change not your judgment now;” on which the synod broke up in confusion. The next year a more criminal artifice was resorted to: another synod remaining opposed to the counsel of Dunstan, he exclaimed, “I am unwilling to be overcome, I commit the cause of the church to the decision of Christ;” when immediately the floor of the hall sank, and a great part of the company was severely bruised or killed by the fall: the beam on which the chair of Dunstan rested was the only one which did not break with the weight of the assembly.^a

P.—Such a circumstance must surely beget a suspicion of contrivance.

F.—I should imagine that it was regarded rather as a most certain proof of the immediate interposition of Providence in behalf of its favourites, this tenth century being, both on the continent as well as in England, peculiarly the age of darkness and ignorance; indeed such was the credulity of the people, that it seemed impossible for the priests to invent any thing which they would not believe.

A.—Nothing else memorable occurred during the reign of Edward: his death was singularly tragical. Of an amiable and unsuspecting disposition, as he was hunting one day in Dorsetshire, being led by the chase

^a Osbern.

near Corfe Castle, where his mother-in-law Elfrida resided, he took the opportunity of paying her a visit: not alighting from his horse, he requested some refreshment, and whilst drinking a cup of mead, a servant of Elfrida approached and stabbed him behind; the king finding himself wounded put spurs to his horse, but becoming faint by loss of blood he fell, and his foot being entangled in the stirrup, he was dragged on the ground till he expired.^a

F.—It is impossible to restrain one's indignation at this woman's barbarous treachery; but she who facilitated the death of her husband, was well worthy to contrive the murder of the young and amiable Edward, whose innocence alone, unconnected with religious prejudices, procured for him the title of Martyr.

A.—The deed was too atrocious even for that age to pardon: in vain she built monasteries, performed penances and various acts of superstition, one of which was to cover her body all over with little crosses to keep off the devil, whom she had but too much reason to fear;^b yet she could never recover the public good opinion: the murder however opened the way for the accession of her son Ethelred, then about ten years old, who weeping for the loss of his brother, she beat unmercifully with a large wax taper.^c

P.—The conduct of this celebrated beauty very ill comports with the homely maxim, "handsome is that handsome does."

A.—Ethelbert gave early indications of his want of courage; arising, perhaps, from his mother's severity. From an accident which befell him when an infant, at the baptismal font,^d somewhat similar to that from

^a Sax. Chron.

^c Gul. Malnesb. lib. 2, c. 10.

^b Gul. Malnesb. lib. 2, c. 9.

^d Ibid.

which the Greek emperor, Constantine Copronymus, derived his name, Dunstan predicted an imbecile reign, which prophecy was fulfilled to the uttermost.

F.—But surely the infant acted more in character than the priest who could make such a ridiculous prediction.

A.—Dunstan, though advanced to the primacy, fell into a state of neglect. His favourite object, the expulsion of the secular clergy from the monasteries, was for the present time unheeded; and he died, it is said, more through grief than age.^a He was, doubtless, a man of great talents and vigour of mind, and would probably, had his influence continued, prevented those calamities which speedily befell the kingdom.

P.—Of what nature were these misfortunes?

A.—The Danes had now for nearly a century discontinued their piratical attacks. The wise regulations of Alfred, and the valour of his successors, had long given security to the shores of England; but as soon as the Danes discovered the reigning prince to be without courage or capacity, they renewed their depredations, and the nation, in the full tide of its strength, was insulted by the invasion of seven Danish ships at Southampton, which town was plundered, and the crews, enriched by the spoil, departed with impunity (981).^b Soon after a like attempt was made in the west with equal success: thus encouraged, the Danes, in considerable force, landed in Essex (991), and defeated Brithnot, the duke of that county, who had ventured to attack them. In this crisis, Ethelred, who obtained the name of the Unready, the clock of his consultations, as a quaint writer expresses it, being always set some hours too late, hearkening to the advice

^a Saxon Chron.

^b Ibid.

of Siricius, now archbishop of Canterbury, basely compounded with the enemy for his safety, by bribing them to retire.^a

F.—Such an expedient was doubtless shameful, as, by stimulating the rapacity of the Danes, it could not fail to induce their return; yet it had been practised by Charles the Bald, king of France, and something very similar was resorted to even by the great Alfred, in the beginning of his reign.

A.—Had the measure been merely temporary, necessity would have pleaded an excuse. The Danes, as might be expected, re-appeared the next year; but the nation, become sensible of its folly, had collected a fleet to repel them:^b owing, however, to the treachery of Alfric, duke of Mercia, this measure failed of success. Sweyn, king of Denmark, and Olave, king of Norway, sailed up the Humber (993,) and spread devastation on every side. In a great battle, they soon after obtained a decisive victory, chiefly through the treachery of the English leaders; a circumstance which, during the whole of this reign, frequently occurred. The two northern kings were induced to depart by the payment of a large sum; Olave promising never to return—his fidelity to his engagement was remarkable: but though he has been canonized by the church of Rome, this quality was hardly the cause. The treaty, however, procured only a short interval of tranquillity, as a fresh party of Danes appeared in the Severn, wasted the whole kingdom, and received an increased bribe for their departure.^c

P.—It is impossible to contrast such pusillanimous weakness with the judicious regulations of Edgar, only

^a Sax. Chron.^b Ibid.^c Ibid.

twenty years before, without alternate feelings of rage and shame.

A.—During a short interval of quiet, Ethelred, who possessed a handsome person, a fine sleeping figure of a king,^a as William of Malmesbury terms him, and now a widower, made successful overtures of marriage to Emma, the sister of Richard, duke of Normandy: the first connexion of that family with the English, whom they were destined so speedily to subdue.^b Buoyed up by this alliance, he conceived the extraordinary project of increasing his security by ordering a massacre of those Danes who had settled in his dominions; secret orders were despatched to commence the execution every where on the same day; neither sex nor age was spared; even Gunilda, who was married to Earl Palling, and who was sister to Sweyn, king of Denmark, was seized and murdered, after seeing her husband and children butchered before her face.^c

F.—But as the Danes are said to have nearly re-peopled Northumberland and East Anglia, and to have been numerous in other parts of the kingdom, how could it happen that, with arms in their hands, they would quietly submit to be massacred?

A.—It is supposed, consequently, that the attack was chiefly confined to the Danish soldiers retained in the English army, who, on many accounts, had become extremely obnoxious to the nation. In that slovenly age, they provoked the jealousy of the natives by an attention to dress and gallantry which seduced the affections of the English wives and daughters. They are said to have carried their *effeminacy* so far as to comb their hair once a day, and to bathe or wash them-

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2.

^b Hen. Hunting. 359. Higden, 271.

^c Sax. Chron.

selves every Sabbath. To the repeated treachery of these Danes, the success of the invaders was commonly attributed: even Earl Paling, who had sworn fealty to Ethelbert, had violated his oath, and fought under the banner of his kinsman, Sweyn.

F.—Whatever may have been the provocation, the atrocity of a massacre leaves the future fate of its perpetrator without a claim to our commiseration.

A.—Sweyn, who wanted but a pretence for a fresh invasion, now hastened to England; and a train of calamities followed, for ten successive years, scarcely to be exceeded by those which the British suffered under Vortigern; or the immediate predecessors of Alfred, from the ancestors of these same ferocious Northmen. Exeter, Norwich, Oxford, Cambridge, with many other towns, were reduced to ashes. Alphage, archbishop of Canterbury, with almost all his clergy, were murdered in cold blood, and the king himself compelled to fly into Normandy.^a In this crisis, the treachery of his nobility seems to have been at least equal to his own weakness. A Danish leader gave to Sweyn this report of the English condition—"A country, but a few years before, illustrious and powerful; now, its king asleep, solicitous only about wine and women, trembling at war, hated by his people and derided by strangers; its generals envious of each other, and its weak governors ready to fly at the first shout of battle."^b Sweyn, about to step into the vacant throne, died at Gainsborough (1014) before he had time to establish himself in his newly acquired dominions.^c The English, still desirous of being ruled by their native prince, recalled Ethelred; but his misconduct was incurable, and Canute, the son

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 10.

^c Ibid.

of Sweyn, became an enemy more terrible than the prince from whom death had lately delivered them.

F.—It is striking to observe how entirely the personal character of the monarch could alter the condition of the kingdom.

A.—The whole nation as well as the king seemed to have lost all courage. “Such is the valour of the Danes,” said an English bishop, Lupus,^a who lived at this time, “that one of them will put ten of our men to flight. Two or three of these Pagans will drive a troop of Christians through the country from sea to sea. They seize the wives and daughters, even of Thanes, and violate them before their faces.” If an Englishman and a Dane met on a bridge, the former durst not stir till the latter had passed over: if he did not make a low reverence, he was sure to be soundly cudgelled.^b The Danes assumed such airs of superiority as generally to be called Lord Danes: and this appellation was long continued as a name of opprobrium; for when one Englishman (says Fabian, who wrote in the reign of Henry VII.) will rebuke another, he will for the most part call him Lurdane.^c

F.—It would not reasonably be supposed that the baseness of Ethelred could affect the present times, and yet something like it is the fact: to buy the absence of the Danes, a tax was imposed on land called Dane gelt,^d which did not expire with the occasion, but has been continued or renewed for centuries in some shape or other, under the pretext of providing for the defence of the kingdom.

A.—Canute, having succeeded to his father’s authority, Edmund, the son of Ethelred, a young prince of great courage and indefatigable perseverance, col-

^a Lupus, in Hicke’s Dissert.

^b Pontoppidan, tom. 9, 159.

^c Fabian, Chron. p. 259.

^d Sax. Chron.

lected an English army sufficiently powerful to give the Danes battle; but in consequence of the king declining to take the field in person, apprehensive perhaps of the treachery of his subjects, the soldiers became discouraged and refused to march. This most imbecile sovereign soon after ended his life by disease (1016).^a

P.—Ethelred then acted to the last with perfect dramatic consistency, *qualis ab incepto*.

A.—Edmund, surnamed Ironside, from his hardy valour, now ascended the throne; but notwithstanding his efforts to maintain it, which were great, and conducted with judgment as well as vigour, he was compelled to divide the kingdom with Canute, and in the course of the year was barbarously murdered at Oxford by two of his chamberlains, at the instigation of Edric, duke of Mercia.^b

P.—All the Saxon princes of the name of Edmund seem to have been unfortunate.

A.—During the contest, the citizens of London strenuously maintained the claim of Edmund: Canute besieging that city^c found that his fleet was unable to make much impression, being impeded by London bridge; he therefore dug a trench, as it is supposed, from Rotherhithe to Vauxhall, near which latter place the remains of such an excavation are alone visible, and by that means brought his ships above the bridge; but his efforts, however great, were unsuccessful in reducing the city.

F.—Such an undertaking proves two facts: the existence of a bridge at London in that early period, and the embankment of the Thames on the south, which is conjectured to have been a work of the Romans.

A.—The entire English throne being now open to

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid. Flor. Wigorn. p. 285.

Canute's ambition, the only obstacle was the two young sons of Edmund Ironside; but getting them into his possession, he sent them to his ally the King of Sweden, desiring that they might give him no further trouble: that monarch, though he understood the meaning, was not base enough to comply with the request, but despatched them to the court of Solomon, king of Hungary.^a Edwin, the elder, died at an early age; the younger brother, Edward, married Agatha, the sister to Solomon, and had a son, known afterwards by the name of Edgar Atheling, and two daughters, Margaret, subsequently queen of Scotland, and Christina, a nun. Canute now enjoying full power in England, exercised it in general with much moderation and wisdom. Edric, the duke of Mercia, infamous by his repeated perfidies, having boasted at a feast that he had slain Edmund Ironside, the king in a rage answered, that since he had been so audacious as to avow so black a treason, he should receive condign punishment, commanding that he should instantly be beheaded, and the body thrown into the Thames; his head was fixed on the highest tower in London, to fulfil a promise, as some say, which Canute had given him, that he should be advanced for his deserts above all the nobility of England.^b

F.—Such a quibbling conceit looks very much like murder in cold blood; though in this case we can feel no sympathy with the unworthy traitor.

A.—Some other actions of Canute reflect more honour on his memory. Having in a moment of exasperation killed a soldier,^c and by that criminal deed violated a law which he had enforced on others, he arraigned himself before his council, and expressed his penitence; he proclaimed impunity to his judges who

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 10.

^b Lib. 2, c. 11.

^c Saxo.

should pronounce their opinion, and in the sight of all cast himself upon the ground, awaiting their sentence. The council withdrew to deliberate as he had required; and they at length determined to let him appoint and inflict his own punishment. Homicide was at this time punishable by a mulct of forty talents of gold; the king fined himself three hundred and sixty, and added nine as a further compensation. Canute about this period married Emma, the widow of the unwarlike Ethelred;^a thus securing the friendship of her brother Richard, duke of Normandy, who had espoused the cause of Alfred and Edward, the two sons of Ethelbert and Emma, and who still protected them in his court.

P.—England, though under the yoke of a foreigner, seems to have profited by the exchange.

A.—The nation was in a state of such tranquillity, that Canute judged it safe to make a voyage to Denmark, his neighbour the King of Sweden having attacked that kingdom; and he took with him a large body of English, under the command of Earl Godwin: this nobleman completely established himself in the king's favour, by assaulting the Swedish army in the night, and obtaining a decisive victory.^b The next morning Canute, seeing the English camp entirely abandoned, imagined that these disaffected troops had deserted to the enemy; but was agreeably surprized to find that they were at that time in full pursuit of the discomfited Swedes. This earl became the most powerful subject perhaps that England has ever known; his family is not traced beyond his father, Wolfnoth, a potent thane of the south, who is called in the Saxon Chronicle "a childe of Sussex." After this Danish exploit, Canute bestowed upon Godwin his

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 11.

daughter Githa, who bore a numerous family, that afterward made a distinguished figure.

F.—The name of Godwin is more familiar to English ears than the mere renown of his actions in so remote an era is entitled to confer, from the circumstance of a part of his vast estates, the isle of Lomea, on the coast of Kent, being overflowed by the sea in the reign of William Rufus, or of Henry the First; and now forming a most dangerous quicksand, too well remembered by mariners as the Godwin Sands.

A.—Whether Lomea were a low main land, whether it were an island, or whether it ever existed at all, is very doubtful; no mention of such a place occurs in Domesday Book, though particular notice is taken of other Kentish islands; and no such effect of this great inundation is recorded by any of the ancient English historians, though they relate the damage inflicted by it in the Low Countries. The earliest notice of the event is in Hector Boethius, a Scotch historian of the end of the fifteenth century, four hundred years after the calamity took place. The sands are more likely to have obtained their name from a part of Godwin's fleet having been wrecked upon them when engaged in hostilities with Edward, though the circumstance has passed unnoticed by the annalists.

F.—A sort of paradoxical proverb, that Tenterden Steeple was the cause of the Godwin Sands, has much contributed to support the tradition; an abbot of Canterbury applying to this building, the money appointed for the purpose of keeping up the sea walls, thus exposed the low land to the inundation of the ocean. The present steeple of Tenterden is however of much more modern origin than the year 1100.

A.—Canute the Great, king of Norway and Denmark,

as well as of England, in his latter days was satiated with the fulness of prosperity, and became indifferent to the glories and the pleasures of the world. According to the fashion of his age, he built churches, endowed monasteries, and made a pilgrimage to Rome. That his piety was not however altogether of a puerile cast, his well-known rebuke to his courtiers sufficiently evinces. Walking on the shore near Southampton, some parasites broke out in admiration of his grandeur, asserting that every thing was possible for him; upon which the monarch ordered a chair to be brought, and seating himself, whilst the tide was rising, exclaimed, "Thou sea, the land whereon I sit is mine, nor hath any one unpunished resisted my commands; I charge thee approach no further, and presume not to wet the feet of thy sovereign lord." But the sea came rolling on as before, and without reverence dashed him with its billows; when turning to his courtiers, he desired them "to behold and consider how feeble was the power of kings, and that none deserved the name of sovereign lord, but he whose eternal laws both heaven and earth obey, and who could say to the ocean, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.'"^a

F.—Such a truth is sufficiently obvious; but this well-timed reproof of courtly adulation has extended the fame of Canute far beyond all his victories.

A.—This monarch, not undeservedly called the Great, died 1035.^b His son Harold Harefoot, by an English lady, succeeded him, so called from his agility in running. The reign of Harold is distinguished only by an act of atrocious barbarity, which properly to understand, we must recollect that Ethelbert the Unready left two sons, Alfred and Edward, by his queen Emma, whom we have

^a Higden, 276. H. Hunting. 564.

^b Sax. Chron.

seen afterwards was married to Canute. These young princes at the death of their father were conveyed for safety to the court of Normandy; where they continued to reside, till by a forged letter they were now induced to pay a visit to their mother at Winchester. Having arrived at that city, Alfred the elder brother, with many professions of friendship, was invited by the king to London; but on his journey he was attacked by the vassals of Earl Godwin at Guildford, and with nearly his whole train butchered under circumstances of peculiar cruelty:^a his mother and brother, apprehending a similar fate, fled beyond sea. Harold Harefoot himself lived but a short time after this revolting transaction;^b and left the throne open to his half-brother Hardicanute, or Canute the Robust, the son of Canute the Great, by Queen Emma.

F.—These fortunate *sobriquets*, or nicknames, are the only circumstances which cause posterity to remember that such princes ever existed.

A.—Hardicanute expressed the greast resentment against the memory of Harold Harefoot, and invited over his half-brother Edward, who immediately preferred an accusation against Earl Godwin for his share in the murder of Alfred; but the wily courtier, to appease the rising storm, presented the king with a magnificent ship, whose stern was covered with plates of gold: it was equipped with eighty handsome warriors, the retainers of Godwin, who each wore golden bracelets, weighing sixteen ounces, and were armed and clothed in the most sumptuous manner.^c The bribe was accepted; and on Godwin's swearing that he was innocent of the alleged crime, he was at once acquitted. Hardicanute

^a Encom. Emmæ.

^b Sax. Chron.

^c Hoveden.

reigned but two years, dying of a drunken debauch at the nuptials of a Danish lord (1041).^a

F.—And so ended the male posterity of Canute in England.

A.—Sweyn, king of Norway, the eldest son of Canute, being absent in that country, and the two last kings dying without issue, none of the Danish race presented themselves; nor was there any person whom the Danes could support as successor to the throne. Prince Edward being fortunately on the spot, was naturally looked up to by the people; and Earl Godwin, whose great power might have frustrated the attempt, was compelled by the common friends of both to lay aside his animosity and concur in restoring liberty to his country.

P.—But after all Edward was not the legitimate heir of the Saxon stock.

A.—Certainly not, whilst the posterity of Edmund Ironside remained; but the long absence of that family in so distant a country as Hungary, induced the nation entirely to overlook their claim; and thus was Edward, afterwards called the Confessor, at the age of forty, firmly seated on the English throne.^b The era of this prince merits more attention than has usually been bestowed upon it, from the important consequences to which it gave rise; though, like his father Ethelred, the talents of Edward were but mean and his disposition unwarlike, yet did the kingdom flourish in security during his whole reign.

P.—With tempers so similar, by what chance did it happen that their fortunes were so different?

A.—The Danes, employed in other enterprises, attempted not in any strength those incursions which had

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Gul. Malmsh. lib. 2, c. 15.

inflicted so great a share of misery; and Earl Godwin, to whom the military force was entrusted, overawed by his talents and vigour the Danish faction within the kingdom, and repressed all piratical attacks from without: the government of the king too, though commonly feeble, yet had a certain well-meaning about it, which much endeared him to his subjects; nor did he want discrimination in bestowing his confidence: he was well aware of Earl Godwin's ambition; and such was his repugnance to the whole family, that though as the price of reconciliation he had married Editha, the daughter of that nobleman, a woman of beauty and merit, and, what was rare in that age, attached to letters, he constantly refused cohabitation.^a

F.—This is an instance of perseverance in dislike that will find few followers; and the folly of it being rendered more conspicuous by the extreme want of an heir to the throne.

A.—Yet it was his conduct in this particular which chiefly acquired him canonization as a saint and confessor from the church of Rome; though the title Confessor is not very aptly given, as it would seem to imply an avowal of faith at the hazard of life, a situation to which Edward was never exposed.

F.—A very pleasing trait of the manners of Editha is thus stated by the historian Ingulph:^b “I saw her,” says he, “many times in my childhood, when I went to visit my father, at that time employed in the palace: if she met me returning from school, she questioned me in the progress which I had made in grammar and logic; and when she had entangled me by some subtle argument, she never failed to bestow upon me three or four crowns, and to order me some refreshment.”

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 15. Ingulph.

^b Croyland, Hist.

A.—Edward enjoying this saintly reputation, a young woman dreamed that she was cured of a scrofulous disease by the touch of the king;^a which afterwards on application being miraculously confirmed, originated the practice of touching for the evil: Edward's successors regarding it as a part of their state, it was continued to the time of William the Third, again revived by Queen Anne, but finally dropped by the House of Hanover.

P.—From such instances we may expect this reign to have been abundant in acts of monkish superstition.

A.—There was no deficiency certainly; but one cause of Edward's high favour with the holy see, was his rebuilding and largely endowing the monastery of St. Peter at Westminster,^b which was performed in commutation of a pilgrimage to Rome, which he had promised by a vow to undertake, should God vouchsafe him to reign in England. This edifice remained till Henry the Third erected the present magnificent and venerable abbey. Edward the Confessor's apparel and ornaments were deposited amongst the regalia in this place; and the sceptre, tunic, spurs, gloves, and staff, still form a part of the paraphernalia of the kings of England, used at their coronation, on account of the piety and halcyon days of their original wearer.

P.—Such a remembrance, preserved through so many ages, reflects honour on his character; but I suppose the original relics have been long destroyed by the consuming tooth of time.

F.—The regalia were preserved in Westminster Abbey till the Reformation, when the more valuable part was removed to the Tower; the iron chests which contained the remainder were broken open by Harry

^a Ailred, Vita S. Edw.

^b Ibid.

Martin, the regicide, in 1642, when an inventory was made of their contents, which were totally spoiled and defaced. The most remarkable thing amongst them was an ancient golden crown, of light workmanship, called Alfred's, which Spelman the antiquary thought was genuine. At the coronation of Charles the Second new insignia were made, which are chiefly in use at the present day.^a

A.—The good nature of Edward was excessive. Once when hunting, a low peasant, either through design or negligence, crossed his game; to whom he said no more than, "I would do thee as shrewd a turn if I could."^b And lying in bed one afternoon, with the curtains drawn round him, a poor pilfering courtier entered the chamber, and finding the king's casket open, which Hugolin the chamberlain had forgotten to shut, he took out of it as much money as he could well carry, and went away; but returning twice for the same purpose, the king, who lay still, pretending not to see, desired him speedily to be packing, for if Hugolin came and took him there, he would not only lose all he had got but would stretch a halter for his pains. When the chamberlain returning found the money was gone, he was excessively enraged; but Edward desired him not to grieve, for he that has taken it, said the imperturbable prince, has more need of it than we have.^c

P.—Some persons would call this mere childish simplicity, others a laudable carelessness of money in a sovereign.

A.—Notwithstanding this easiness of temper, he never forgave his mother Emma, for her second marriage with Canute; and he compelled her to renounce the vast possessions with which she had been endowed by

^a A. Taylor, *Glory of Regality*.

^b Ailred, *Vita S. Edw.*

^c *Ibid.*

that monarch. The old story^a of her passing blindfolded and barefoot, unhurt, over nine burning ploughshares laid a foot asunder, for the purpose of exculpating herself from the charge of participating in the murder of her son Alfred, and of entertaining too great a familiarity with Alwin, bishop of Winchester, is scarcely more than a monkish legend; the same being related of Cunegonde, wife to the Emperor Henry the Second, on no better foundation. The real fate of Emma is sufficiently remarkable; that of a queen, the widow of two kings, and the mother of two more, being reduced to a state of comparative poverty.

P.—Could our Saxon ancestors really believe in the efficacy of such a mode of ascertaining guilt or innocence as the ordeal?

A.—The ordeal, or trial by judgment of God, as it was called, was established with all the German nations, either by the method of touching hot iron, or by immersing the arm in boiling water: another mode also was by throwing the accused into cold water; if he sank, he was innocent: this is still the approved way of ascertaining a witch at the present day, both in France and England. Such an appeal as the ordeal as a test of crime, however absurd, is not more so than a resort to the duel, introduced afterwards by the Normans; where the guilty by superior prowess might escape and the innocent be slaughtered. Whether the ecclesiastics of this age possessed any chemical secret for resisting the power of fire is not known; but it has been remarked, that neither themselves, nor any accused person who defended the rights of the church, ever suffered injury from resorting to this mode of vindication.

F.—The practice of compurgation, or bringing wit-

^a Higden, Polychron. p. 277.

nesses to prove that they believed in the innocence of the party accused, though it seems much of a piece with the ordeal, yet it must be allowed at least as a testimony to character.

A.—Though Edward governed with equity, he gave some offence to his subjects by his partiality to the manners and language of Normandy.^a Educated in that country, he had contracted there many friendships, which continued after his elevation to the English throne: several vacant sees, and even the primacy, he filled with Normans; in consequence Earl Godwin's disaffection now broke out into open rebellion;^b but by the intervention of Leofric, earl of Mercia, and Siward, earl of Northumberland, two noblemen of almost equal potency with himself, the difference was composed; and Godwin was compelled to give as hostages for his good behaviour his son and grandson, whom Edward for safe keeping sent into Normandy.

F.—The king appears not to have been deficient in policy, by thus balancing powerful parties against each other.

A.—It was his happy fortune that the earls of Mercia and Northumberland were men of unshaken fidelity; they united to protect him against Godwin, whose power otherwise, like that of the mayors of the palace in France, would have been too strong for his master. These two nobles are among the very few Anglo-Saxons whose names are remembered: the first by a whimsical story, as the husband of the Lady Godiva, who obtained remission of a tax for the citizens of Coventry, by riding naked through the town; such being the conditions imposed by the earl: she performed the task, concealing her body with her long and flowing

^a Ingulph, p. 62.

^b Sax. Chron.

hair; and all persons were commanded to keep within doors and from the window on pain of death. Notwithstanding this severe penalty, there was one person who could not forbear giving a look; but it is said that it cost him his life; others report that he was stricken with blindness.

P.—Is it possible that this story, which has so much the air of a legend, can be founded in truth?

A.—It is first related by Mathew of Westminster^a in the thirteenth century. The great antiquary Dugdale seems to give it implicit credit; and it is not easy to account for the invention of such a tale. An occasional procession, time out of mind, has been held at Coventry in commemoration of the event; and a very ancient window of Trinity Church, in that city, displayed the story, with this inscription :

“ I, Luric, for the love of thee,
Do set Coventry toll-free.”

F.—Perhaps it would have been more correct to say that the lady's name, rather than the earl's, had secured the notice of posterity, by being connected with “Peeping Tom.”

A.—Siward, earl of Northumberland, having been appointed commander in the only foreign expedition undertaken in this reign against Macbeth, the usurping king of Scotland, whom he defeated, acquired the highest reputation. This earl, characterized by Shakspeare in his immortal tragedy,

“ Gracious England hath
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men;
An older and a better soldier, none
That Christendom gives out,”

has obtained a lasting remembrance; he was a man of

^a Flor. Hist. p. 424.

gigantic stature, and of the most martial disposition. When news was brought that his son was slain in battle, he anxiously enquired whether the wound was in his front; and being informed that it was on the breast of the young warrior, he replied, "I wish no other death to me or mine."^a When he found his own end approaching, he rose from his bed, and commanded his servants to put on his armour, then grasping his spear in his left hand and his battle-axe in his right, he declared that in such a manner only ought a soldier to die, and presently expired.^b

F.—Nearly the same sentiment was expressed by the Emperor Vespasian, who displayed in his last moments equal intrepidity.

A.—Earl Godwin's death, which happened the year before, was remarkable: whilst sitting at table with Edward, mention happening to be made of the murder of Alfred, the king frowned upon Godwin, who to vindicate himself said, "At every mention of thy brother Alfred, thou lookest, O king, severely upon me; but let not God suffer me to swallow this morsel if I be guilty of aught done against his life or thy advancement." Immediately after these words becoming suddenly choked, he sank down, and was carried from the apartment.^c

P.—This looks like a monkish interpretation of the judgment of God.

A.—Whether the conversation took place as reported, may be doubtful; but it is certain that Godwin fell speechless at the table in a fit, and died in a few days. Edward, however, was not relieved from his anxiety, as Harold the son of Godwin became an object of still greater apprehension: more politic, more

^a Hen. Hunting.

^b Ralph de Diceto.

^c Flor. Wigorn, 415.

subtle, more insinuating than his father, his design of succeeding to the throne became so apparent, that the king to defeat it invited from Hungary his nephew Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside, with his family, to England; but this prince dying a month after his arrival,^a and his young son Edgar Atheling, discovering great imbecility of mind, revived the ambitious hopes of Harold; which Edward ever ready to crush, gave, it is believed, secret intimations to William, duke of Normandy, of his intention to make him the heir of his dominions.

F.—Such a circumstance palliates the ambition of William, particularly if a will of Edward the Confessor containing such a legacy ever existed.

A.—No document was ever produced; though such a claim formed the principal, nay the sole, foundation of William's title. About this time Harold paid a visit to the court of Normandy; an incident which produced the most important consequences, and which was a material cause of his subsequent disasters. The motives of this voyage are variously related: some authorities asserting that a pleasure-boat in which Harold was sailing was driven upon the coast of Normandy by a gale of wind;^b others that he was induced to pay William a visit, for the purpose of restoring his brother and nephew to liberty, who had been retained in that country as hostages;^c whilst the Norman writers insist that he was sent by Edward to announce the intention of appointing the duke his heir.^d The favourers of this latter opinion support their pretensions by a sort of document not often resorted to by historians, being no other than a piece of needlework, reputed to be wrought

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 13.

^c Eadmer, 4. Sim. Dunelm, 195.

^d Gul. Pict. 77. Ord. Vital. 492.

by Matilda, the wife of the Conqueror, and her work women, and which is still preserved at Bayeux, in Normandy. The substance of this curious monument of antiquity is of white linen, or canvass, twenty-three inches in width, and no less than two hundred and twelve feet in length: the figures of men, horses, birds, &c. are worked in the manner of samplers, in worsted, in their proper colours, but with small pretensions to symmetry or proportion. The work represents the whole progress of the conquest, and is divided into various compartments: the first of which bears an allusion to the present question, Harold being there represented as taking leave of King Edward, and about to depart on some important mission.

P.—But surely this is equally applicable to Harold's intention of redeeming his hostages.

A.—From the subsequent transactions, Harold appears not to have even been aware of the duke's pretensions to the English crown, till he found himself in his power; and now awake to the imminent danger in which he was placed, he submitted to swear^a that he would assist the enterprise of William, and renounce whatever hopes he might formerly have entertained for himself. In order to make the oath more obligatory, William secretly conveyed under the altar some relics of the most revered martyrs. Harold, though much astonished at the discovery, renewed his professions, and was honourably dismissed by his potent rival with every outward mark of mutual confidence.

F.—There were no doubt casuists in that age who could relieve the conscience of Harold, by suggesting the invalidity of oaths extorted by fear.

A.—Soon after Harold's return, the king lying sick

^a Gul. Pict. 79, 80.

and enfeebled with age, the council sent to request that he would appoint a successor; but with his habitual irresolution, and not being in a condition to disturb himself with the proposal, he replied, that since they were assembled, he left it to them to choose the person whom they judged most fit to rule over them; and soon afterwards expired, in his 65th^a year, January 5, 1066.

P.—This is something like Alexander the Great's bequest of his empire, "to the worthiest."

A.—Edward the Confessor, it must be allowed, was no Alexander; but though too much tinctured with a superstitious spirit, yet he was a mild, kind, and beneficent monarch. The digest of laws which he had compiled, though not now extant, was held just and good, and for ages desired by the English from their Norman kings. Edward was interred the morning after his decease at Westminster; and on the afternoon of the same day Harold was crowned at St. Paul's, by Aldred, archbishop of York.^b

P.—By what title did Harold assume the throne?

A.—Like William, he too pretended a nomination from Edward; but as no testament was ever discovered, the claims of both were a palpable usurpation, Edgar Atheling (so called from Athel—noble,^c a title borne by the sons of the Saxon kings, and by other potent persons,) being the undoubted heir. Nor could Harold be said to derive his crown from the consent of the people,^d as he did not wait even to assemble the great council, and the nation at large was as much influenced by fear as favour.

F.—Yet personally he appears to have been a man of much merit, and perhaps deserved the crown had he been less forward to obtain it.

^a Sax. Chron.

^b Mat. Westmon.

^c Spelman, Gloss.

^d Gul. Malmesh. lib. 2, c. 15. Ord. Vital. 492.

A.—William was excessively enraged at the accession of Harold, and sent an embassy to England, upbraiding that prince with his breach of faith, and summoning him to resign the kingdom; which proposal, as expected, was spurned at with indignation.^a William therefore prepared to assert his claim by force, and assembled an army of sixty thousand chosen soldiers. To engage the religious prejudices of his barons in his favour, he appealed to the Pope; who much delighted at such a mark of respect, declared Harold a perjured usurper, and denounced excommunication against him and his adherents; and further to encourage William, sent him a consecrated banner,^b and, as some modern authors^c relate, a ring containing one of St. Peter's hairs.

F.—It was surely very unfortunate for England that these powerful competitors who contended for her dominion, should possess no other conceivable claim than the power of the sword.

A.—The new monarch, from his general spirit of equity, began to acquire very much the affections of his subjects. During the late reign, his brother Tosti having been expelled for his tyranny from the government of Northumberland, by the consent of Harold, had now, excited by inveterate rancour, entered into measures with Halfager, king of Norway, for the invasion of England. These leaders arrived in the Humber with a large fleet and army. After some trifling successes, they were met by Harold at Stanford Bridge, near York, where they were both slain, and their army totally routed, September 25.^d

F.—So slight an impression does a mere battle leave

^a Mat. West. 454.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^c Speed, Baker.

^d Gul. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 15.

behind it, unless followed by important civil consequences, that this engagement at Stanford Bridge, though represented as one of the bloodiest ever fought in England, and in which an invading monarch was left dead in the field, seems to be so little remembered as to be scarcely known.

A.—The rendezvous of the Norman fleet was at the mouth of the small river Dive, between the Seine and the Orne, where it was detained for a month by contrary winds: at length it reached St. Valery, near Dieppe, but suffered so much from tempests as greatly to discourage the whole army. William luckily discovering the efficacy of the relics of the patron saint of the place, ordered them to be carried in a religious procession; and the wind speedily changing, he landed with all his forces at Pevensey, in Sussex, three days only after the battle of Stanford. As William leaped on shore he had the misfortune to fall, but had the presence of mind to turn the accident to advantage, observing that he had taken possession of the country;^a and a soldier plucking some thatch from a cottage, presented it to his general, as giving him livery of seizin of the kingdom.

P.—This seems to emulate the example of Cæsar, to whom a similar accident occurring, he averted the omen by exclaiming, “Africa, I hold thee fast.”

F.—This then was not the only age in which such a trivial occurrence could dispirit a whole army; but as a proof of the spirit of superstition then prevalent, the appearance of a comet^b is particularly remarked by all the authors of this period.

A.—The duke soon after removed his fleet and camp to Hastings, whither Harold hastened by forced marches

^a Mat. Westm. 459.

^b Wil. Gemel. 285. Mat. Westm. 459.

to meet the invader. Though the late victory in the north was honourable to Harold's skill and courage, yet it proved prejudicial, by diminishing the number of his troops; and an unfortunate dispute arose respecting the distribution of the spoil. In this state of affairs, Gurth, the king's brother, began to entertain apprehensions of the event, and remonstrated with Harold, that it would be better policy to prolong the war, than to put his whole fortune on the issue of a single battle;^a at least he ought not to expose his own person: and that having been so unfortunate as to be constrained to swear upon the holy relics in support of William's claim, another commander might give the soldiers more assured hopes of success.

P.—That unlucky oath seems to have stared Harold in the face which ever way he looked, like the flaming sword over the gates of Paradise.

A.—Many vauntings passed between the two leaders. William offered to decide his claim by single combat; Harold replied, that the God of armies would soon be the arbiter of their differences. At length the day dawned, October 14, 1066, on which the most important battle ever fought on English ground was to decide the fate of the kingdom.

F.—The monkish writers are fond of contrasting the employment of the two armies on the previous night, the English passing it in feasting and jollity, the Normans in prayer and silence; as if to these causes were attributable the events of the subsequent conflict.^b

A.—The duke evinced the most cheerful alacrity: his corslet getting on the wrong side whilst arming, "The strength of my dukedom will now," said he, "be

^a Gul. Malmesh. lib. 5.

^b Ibid. lib. 5. Gul. Pict.

turned into a kingdom.”^a After haranguing his principal officers in terms suitable to the occasion, he divided his army into three lines: the first, led by Montgomery, consisted of archers and light armed infantry; the second, commanded by Martel, was composed of his bravest battalions, heavily armed and ranged in close order; his cavalry, at whose head he placed himself, formed the third line, and were so disposed as to flank each wing. Both horses and men were in complete armour. The papal banner was carried by Toustain^b the Fair; and the signal of battle being given, the whole army moved at once, and singing the celebrated song of Roland,^c the renowned peer of Charlemagne, advanced in order to meet the enemy.

F.—Of this famous song, which was so long chanted in France, not a single particle remains; the tune it seems was begun by a certain knight called Taillefer, on whom the honour was conferred for his strong and powerful voice, and who presently fell in the battle.

A.—Immediately before the attack, the Normans shouted “God is our help;” to which the English replied, “Christ’s rood”—the holy rood.^d Harold had seized the advantage of a rising ground; and securing his flank by trenches, he resolved to stand on the defensive: the Kentish men were placed in front, a post which they always claimed as their due; the Londoners guarded the standard; and the king, accompanied by his brothers Gurth and Leofwin, placed themselves in the centre on foot, resolving to conquer or die. The first onset of the Normans was terrible, but was received with equal valour by the English. The combat continued for a long time furious, and the for-

^a Gul. Pict. 201.

^b Gul. Pict. 127.

^c Gul. Malmesh. lib. 3.

^d Gul. Pict. 124.

mer began to give way. In this state of the battle, William resorted to the stratagem of a pretended flight; which drawing the English from the advantage of their position, they fell into some disorder, but in a short time recovered their firmness. The same artifice was again tried, and again succeeded; yet such was the bravery of the English, that they once more rallied, and maintained the conflict with unabated spirit: but a little before sunset an arrow pierced the eye of Harold,^a and the blow was instantly mortal; his two brothers were also slain; and the English, dispirited by the fate of these princes, gave ground on every side, and were pursued with great slaughter by their exulting enemies. The loss of the Normans was about fifteen thousand; the number of the English who engaged, and the amount of their loss, were never ascertained. The body of Harold was discovered amidst a heap of slain, by his mistress Edith with the swan's neck, who had been induced to make the search at the solicitation of two monks of Waltham.^b

P.—Such a mighty interest as the crown of England was then decided by a single battle.

A.—Harold was evidently wrong in hazarding all upon such an issue: delay, from various causes, might have ruined the project of William, who had possession of no strong holds, and but few friends or correspondents in the kingdom; nor could he reasonably have calculated, that the king, with his brothers and almost all the nobility of the south of England, should perish at one blow, leaving him no competitor but the imbecile Edgar Atheling. His enterprise succeeded against probability: had the expedition failed, posterity would have judged the invasion to have been rash and imprudent; but

^a Gul. Pict. 128.

^b MS. Abb. Waltham. Speed, Chron.

such is the power of events, that all such reflections are dispelled, and historians unite to extol William the Conqueror as the most judicious, as well as the bravest and most fortunate of commanders.

P.—Such then was the termination of the Anglo Saxon rule, after a sway of five centuries.

A.—In looking back on this long period, our feelings of admiration are not very strongly excited: courage seems to be the only very estimable virtue possessed by the Anglo-Saxons, and that quality was subject to great fluctuations. A want of humanity, an addiction to intemperance and disorder, a contempt for letters, a disregard to the useful as well as the polite arts, are conspicuous throughout their history. As the parent of the English language, the Saxon tongue well merits the attention of the philological student, but it contains no work which can amuse the imagination or enlarge the understanding; and though the antiquary may discover the origin of some of our present usages, and a little of our municipal law, in the institution of the Anglo-Saxons, yet the real frame of the present English Constitution must be rather sought in the feudal system, and in the fortunate introduction of the Commons as a part of Parliament.

F.—It is remarkable how little of our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons is derived from cotemporary writers; most of the particulars being gleaned from historians who lived after the conquest, but who doubtless had access to many original documents now lost.

A.—Asserius, bishop of Sherburne, is somewhat an exception: his *Annals* are meagre; but his *Life of Alfred*, though written in a homely style, and not with the most lucid order, is valuable as a faithful and authentic biographical sketch of his friend and master. The

works of other Saxon writers are mostly lives of saints, trivial in matter, dull in style, and barren of information.

F.—The Saxon Chronicle is however a national document, as unique as it is valuable.

A.—Its translator^a has remarked, “That except the sacred oracles of the Jews, there is no other work extant, ancient or modern, which exhibits at one view a regular chronological panorama of a people, described in rapid succession by different writers through so many ages, in their own vernacular language.” Its various authors can merely be guessed at: the work gives no account of the Saxons anterior to the invitation of Vortigern, but continues their annals till the death of King Stephen. We can scarcely imagine a more authentic register of facts, somewhat meagre it must be allowed; and though the style is equally dry, yet the volume contains many pieces of early Saxon poetry. This Chronicle is an invaluable repertory to the student of the Saxon language and antiquities; and forms, with the labours of venerable Bede, nearly the sole foundation of all real British history, from the arrival of the Saxons to the Norman conquest.

^a Ingram.

DISSERTATION V.

Colchester Castle.

THE NORMANS.

	A. D.		A. D.
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR,	1066	HENRY I.	1100
WILLIAM RUFUS - - -	1087	STEPHEN - - - - -	1135

SECTION I.

F.—THIS county of Essex, once a kingdom, though in picturesque effect not sustaining a comparison with many parts of England, has yet that tranquil beauty and smiling fertility of aspect which repay, at least to the cultivator, the want of those romantic additions—rocks and mountains.

A.—Colchester, its most populous town, may in point of antiquity vie with any other in the kingdom, it having been very early a Roman station,^a with the name of Colonia. The happy situation of Colchester, commanding the adjacent country, claimed the attention of the first conquerors of Britain; nor did it cease to retain its importance amidst the mutations of subsequent invaders.

P.—Passing down the very pleasing main street of this town, we obtain a glimpse of the venerable remains of the castle, which have baffled so many storms; and whose strength attests that they will still

^a Dissert. II. page 42.

continue for centuries a melancholy contrast to the frail duration of human existence.

A.—Though antiquaries are seldom sentimental, their pursuits having invidiously been represented as tending to extinguish rather than awaken sensibility, yet your observation is natural; architectural ruins being often calculated to excite a powerful and complicated emotion, embracing the past, the present, and the future condition of the world.

F.—Of the long-continued habitation of the Romans in this town we have evident proof, in the abundance of the Roman tiles which are worked up in the walls and in several of the churches; the castle too exhibits them, disposed with so much regularity, that a careless observer might conclude the structure was of Roman origin.

A.—The general style of the work precludes such a mistake. Colchester Castle was erected by Eudo,^a dapifer, or grand sewer, of William the Conqueror, in the year 1076, for the purpose of overawing the neighbourhood; about the same period, similar fortresses were built in various towns in England, the remains of which are still visible at Exeter, Nottingham, York, Lincoln, Cambridge, Chester, and some other places, but scarcely any in superior preservation to what we now behold.

P.—Did England contain any castles before the conquest?

A.—I should conclude not more than half a dozen, since the paucity of places of defence was one cause why William so rapidly subdued the kingdom: the castles of Oxford and Nerwich are conjectured, but I think upon rather slender foundations, to be of Saxon

^a Dugdale, Monasticon.

origin;^a like so many of these buildings, their destiny has been strangely perverted; the magnificent residences of a feudal lord are become county prisons.

P.—But after all, is their occupation as a prison so great a perversion of their original purpose? was not that part of the castle called the donjon, or keep, often tenanted with despairing captives?

A.—To suppose that the donjon, or keep, originally meant a prison is erroneous, it having been the principal part of the castle in which the lord made his residence, and was so strongly secured as to afford the besieged a safe resort. The term donjon itself is of such obscure and doubtful derivation with the French critics, that I will not attempt to discuss it: that the gloominess of its apartments gave occasion to our word dungeon, in the sense of a close and dark place of confinement, is incontestible; but the real prison of the castle were its deep and loathsome vaults beneath.

P.—These massy ruins, we may then conclude, were the walls of the donjon, or keep?

A.—Evidently; and though now reduced in height to two stories, they must originally have been of double their present elevation. The keep, or tower (as it is sometimes emphatically called,) of a castle was usually built on a rising ground, and near a river. The structure before us was of an oblong form, with a turret at, or near each corner, three of them being square, the fourth semicircular; and notwithstanding the dilapidations of time, the vestiges of the general plan of a Norman fortification, in most of its parts, may be tolerably well traced out.

P.—But being unacquainted with this general plan, an explanation is desirable.

^a King, *Munimenta Antiq.*

A.—The keep, or principal part of the castle, contained the state apartments, the great hall, and various rooms for lodging, being four or five stories in height; it was consequently very lofty, and formed a noble object in the surrounding landscape; in the corner turrets were staircases, and often a well; the walls were of an extraordinary thickness, which has enabled them to survive the outworks, and to bid defiance to time and the seasons. A certain Goth, who, about a century and half ago, purchased Colchester Castle, for the purpose of pulling it down and selling the materials, found the walls so well cemented, that he was obliged to desist from his undertaking by their extreme tenacity.^a

P.—Such an attempt was truly sacrilegious.

A.—The space of vacant ground immediately surrounding the keep was called the upper or inner ballium, a bastard Latin word of the middle ages, derived from the French *baille*, a defence, or palisade, and now corrupted into bayley: this space was enclosed by a thick wall, garnished with small towers. On the outside of this wall was another space, called the outer or lower ballium; which was likewise defended by an exterior wall of lofty elevation, and strengthened with towers: on this wall stood the defenders of the castle, behind a sort of embattled parapet, and who discharged on the besiegers various missile weapons, such as arrows, darts, and stones; and surrounding the whole was a deep fosse, or moat.

P.—A specimen of which is still seen in the Tower Ditch of London.

A.—The entrance to the castle was through the great gateway, forming a part of the exterior wall: this was strongly fortified with towers on each side, and

^a Morant, Essex.

over it were apartments for the porter. The gate was secured by a portcullis, and a drawbridge was thrown over the fosse. In the outer ballium were lodgings and barracks for the garrison, also a well, and a chapel; often too there was a mount, from which the eye could explore the adjacent country. In some of the larger fortresses, for the defence of the great gate stood an outwork, called the barbican, a name of Arabian origin, but its meaning is unknown: it consisted, however, of a wall with turrets. We may suppose that many varieties of structure existed, but a perfect Norman place of defence^a coincides with this description; and such seems to have been the castle of Colchester.

F.—As military stations, these castles, from their extreme strength, must have completely answered the intention of William the Conqueror, in bridling the unruly inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

A.—From the impunity and licentious habits of their possessors and inmates, they were ever felt as intolerable grievances: under the name of protection, a pretext for plunder was never wanting. Mathew Paris declares, that in England there were as many tyrants as lords of castles; and that these places were very nests of devils and dens of thieves.

F.—Yet the Normans appear to have made further advances in the arts of civilized life than the English, particularly in architecture, several splendid specimens yet remaining in Normandy of a date antecedent to the conquest.

A.—The Normans, from their first settlement in their province of Neustria, as it was previously called, had the fortune to be governed by a race of princes of

^a Grose, *Antiquities of England*, Preface.

singular talent as well as valour. Rollo the Dane, at the end of the ninth century, expelled from his own small principality in the north by the King of Denmark, sought in a richer soil and warmer climate a recompense for his losses: his first attempt was upon England, then governed by Alfred; but finding little chance of success in contending with so vigilant a monarch, he turned his enterprise against France;^a and committed in that kingdom such destructive ravages, that Charles the Simple was compelled to submit to the expedient already practised by Alfred, and offered the invaders a settlement in some of the provinces which they had depopulated.^b

P.—But at that period it is not to be presumed that these piratical adventurers were more enlightened than their ferocious brethren who had so long devastated Britain.

A.—Rollo in the decline of his life applied himself to the improvement of his newly acquired territory: he parcelled out the greater part of Normandy amongst his captains, but treated his French subjects with singular mildness and justice; he embraced the Christian faith, and established law and good order throughout his dominions. This wise example was so advantageously followed by all his successors, that the Normans became thoroughly intermingled with the French; and so well acquired their language and imitated their manners, that in the course of a century they were considered not only as a brave but as a highly polished people.^c

P.—But had they become exempt from the innate turbulence which always distinguished the northern race?

A.—The nobility never lost their contentious spirit. Duke Robert, the fifth in descent from Rollo, dying in

^a Gul. Gemet. lib. 2.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and having appointed his natural son William, then only nine years of age, his successor, in preference to some legitimate branches of the ducal family, the whole province became a scene of such furious contention,^a that had not the young prince, as he advanced in years, given manifest evidence of those signal qualities which distinguished his whole life, it would probably have lost its separate existence, and reverted to the crown of France.

F.—The young prince gave very precocious indications of his qualities, for as soon as he was born he laid hold of the rushes of a pillow, and griped them so fast that his little fist was obliged to be unclenched before he would let them go: this made the good women predict that he would one day prove a great acquirer, since he began so early.^b But the attempt of his father to change the order of succession in favour of an illegitimate child would be sufficient in any nation to excite opposition.

A.—William was so little ashamed of his birth, that even after the conquest of England many of his grants commence with “I, William the Bastard,^c &c.,” a word now become coarse and offensive: but he probably judged, that as it was an undeserved reproach from which he could not escape, it was his wisest policy openly to avow. His mother, Harlotta, whose name has since been so invidiously applied, was the daughter of a tanner at Falaise:^d she captivated Robert by her graceful mien in dancing; she married during the duke’s life a Norman soldier, by name Herluin, of Canterville, and had several children.^e Her two sons, Robert, earl of Mortaigne, and Odo, bishop of Bayeux, were both

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 3.

^b Ibid.

^c Spelman, Gloss.

^d Brompton.

^e Gul. Gemet.

distinguished in the subsequent transactions with England: the former being created Earl of Cornwall, and enriched with seven hundred and ninety-three^a manors; the latter, Earl of Kent, was put off with only four hundred and thirty-nine.

P.—The spoils and forfeiture, of course, of the unfortunate English.

A.—Nothing could exceed the consternation and dismay which befel the nation on learning the fatal issue of the battle of Hastings, the death of Harold, the slaughter of the principal nobility, and the rout and dispersion of the army. Thus circumstanced, the two potent Earls of Mercia and Northumberland, Edwin and Morcar, fled to London with the remains of their broken forces; and in concert with Stigand, the primate, proclaimed Edgar Atheling.^b But the extreme imbecility of that undoubted heir of the Saxon line precluded the people from looking up to him as a rallying point in this emergency; and the two earls were besides suspected of a design to govern under his name; the superior clergy too, many of whom were Normans, began to declare in favour of William; the Pope's bull, by which his undertaking had been consecrated, appearing as a sanction for their submission; and the community, accustomed to the yoke of the Danish princes, hoping that William would, like Canute, govern them by their own laws, became unwilling to hazard further resistance.

P.—Did the Conqueror immediately pursue the advantages of his victory?

A.—His army being attacked by a dysentery, was compelled to remain a few days at Dover;^c the castle

^a Brady, *Introd.*

^b Order, Vital. Hoveden.

^c Gul. Pict.

of which town capitulated at his approach. In the progress of William to the metropolis, he was surprised by the appearance of a moving grove,^a like that described by the dramatist as approaching from Birnam Wood: it was a body of the Kentish men:

“ Now near enough, your leafy screens throw down,
And show like those you are.”

This troop assured the Conqueror of their submission, on the condition that he would secure their ancient immunities. This was readily granted; and hence the continuance of the *Saxon* tenure of gavelkind in part of the county of Kent; the chief feature in which, besides the descent of the estate amongst all the sons in equal shares, is its not being forfeited by any attainder or execution for felony, on the maxim of “ The father to the bough, the son to the plough.”^b

F.—The story has been questioned, as the season being now the beginning of November, where were the green boughs to be found? But it rests with the objectors to find a more probable cause than this compact, for the continuance of the custom of gavelkind in Kent to the present hour.

A.—William appeared before the gates of London, but was refused admittance; he burnt Southwark,^c which made the Londoners dread the like fate for their city; and he then proceeded along the banks of the Thames, which river he crossed at Wallingford, and advanced to Berkhamsted, in Hertfordshire, within thirty miles of the metropolis. A scene of national degradation was now about to take place, which cannot be contemplated without a strong feeling of compassion: the two Archbishops of Canterbury and York, with Edgar Atheling and the chief nobility of the king-

^a Thorn.

^b Lambarde, *Peramb.*

^c *Sin. Dunelm.*

dom, were compelled to declare, in an interview with William, their intention of yielding to his authority,^a and to acknowledge that they knew no one more worthy than himself to hold the reins of government.

P.—The Conqueror then at length saw in his grasp that diadem for which he had so strenuously contended.

A.—But which at this moment he hesitated to accept;^b whether he wished a more explicit and formal consent of the English nation, or was desirous of owing his crown to the power of the sword alone, is uncertain. His coronation, however, was soon afterward performed in Westminster Abbey, by Aldred,^c archbishop of York, in presence of the most considerable nobles and gentry, both Norman and English; and the duke took the usual oath administered to the Anglo-Saxon kings, to govern according to the laws.

F.—Of how small obligation such oaths are considered in the minds of some princes, let the sequel determine.

A.—Thus did William, at the age of forty-two, acquire the crown of England by a pretended testament of Edward the Confessor, but virtually by force of arms. To pretend, as some have done, that he was freely elected by the people, is absurd; their authority at this period much resembling that of slaves made during war, who grant to their masters the right to chastise them.

F.—It has been said that William, like Augustus, came to the empire neither by conquest, nor usurpation, nor inheritance, nor election; but by a strange mixture of all these rights.

A.—Even so early as during the ceremony of the

^a Hoveden.

^b Gul. Pict.

^c Ingulph.

coronation, burst out those symptoms of jealousy and animosity which prevailed between the two people for many ages, so greatly to the disadvantage of the English. The Norman soldiers placed without the church, on hearing the acclamations within, pretended that the English were offering violence to their duke; and they immediately assaulted the populace, and burnt and plundered the neighbouring houses: nor was it without the utmost difficulty that William could appease the tumult.^a

P.—We may suppose that, in the beginning of his reign at least, the king was desirous of appearing to govern with some shew of equity.

A.—Not only so, but he even affected to rest every thing on established foundations; which circumstance was the cause that, in the subsequent wreck of the English liberties, some few vestiges of the ancient usages and constitution still remained. The estates of Harold, and of those only who fell at the battle of Hastings, were now confiscated, and distributed amongst the Norman captains; many who carried arms against William were received into favour, and the kingdom submitted quietly to his authority; the English flattering themselves that they had merely changed the succession of their sovereigns, without injury to the form of government. But the king placed all real power in the hands of his countrymen; and still kept possession of the sword, to which alone he was sensible he owed his advancement.

F.—To the ecclesiastical body, by whom his success had been much forwarded, William at all times expressed his gratitude: on the very spot where Harold fell, he erected and richly endowed a new convent;

^a Gul. Pict.

which thus, beneath the pretence of a pious oblation, served as a lasting memorial of his victory, under the name of Battle Abbey.^a

P.—And do its ruins still attest the site of that fatal contest?

A.—A part of its remains is converted into a mansion, now the property and residence of the Webster family. The abbey must have been a noble pile: the gate-house is entirely preserved, and in it are held meetings relating to the jurisdiction of the place; the hall was magnificent; and the kitchen, arched at top, so spacious as to contain five fireplaces.

P.—Though the design then was to pray for the souls of the dead, yet it appears that ample provision was made for the bodies of the living.

A.—The founder originally intended the establishment for one hundred and forty monks, but the number never exceeded sixty; they were of the Benedictine order, and the first inhabitants were transplanted from the monastery of St. Martin, at Marmontier, in Normandy; the abbot was mitred, and enjoyed many extraordinary privileges;^b in the church were deposited the sword and robe of the Conqueror, which he wore at his coronation. But a greater curiosity, which remained till the general suppression of the monasteries, and was then lost, was the Battle Abbey roll, or a table of the Norman gentry who came into England with the Conqueror.

F.—But if we are to believe such great antiquaries as Dugdale and Camden, its authority was not much to be relied on, there being in it many errors, not to say falsifications; for the crafty monks, finding it an acceptable thing to be reputed the descendants of those who

^a Gul. Gemet. Saxon Chron.

^b The Charter in Brady, vol. 2, Append.

were companions of William in his expedition, gratified many of their benefactors by inserting their names in this ancient catalogue.

A.—I can produce you a copy, which is taken from Holinshed's Chronicle; other lists are extant in Grafton, Stowe, and, where you would not expect to find such a thing, in Fox's Acts and Monuments, vulgarly called the Book of Martyrs. But this is the most copious: the catalogue is thus set forth:

THE NAMES OF SUCH NOBLES AND GENTLEMEN OF MARQUE
WHO CAME IN AT THIS TIME WITH THE CONQUEROR.

Aumarle	Byseg	Bickard
Aincourt	Bardolfe	Banastre
Audeley	Basset	Baloun
Angilliam	Bigot	Beauchampe
Argentoune	Bohun	Bray
Arundell	Bailif	Bandy
Avenant	Bondeville	Bracy
Abell	Brabason	Boundes
Auverne	Baskerville	Bascoun
Aunwers	Bures	Broilem
Angers	Bounilaine	Brolevy
Angenoune	Bois	Burnell
Archere	Botelere	Bellet
Anvay	Boureher	Baudewin
Aspervile	Brabaion	Beaumont
Albeville	Berners	Burdon
Audeville	Braibuf	Bertevila
Amoverdvile	Brande	Barre
Arey	Bronce	Busseville
Akeny	Burgh	Blunt
Albeny	Bushy	Beaupere
Aybevare	Banet	Bevill
Amay	Breton	Bardvedor
Aspermound	Bluet	Brette
Amerenges	Blondell	Barret
Bertram	Baious	Bonrett
Buttecourt	Browne	Bainard
Brehus	Beke	Barnivale

Bonett	Comin	Denaville
Barry	Columber	Dercy
Bryan	Cribett	Dive
Bodin	Creuquere	Dispencere
Berteville	Corbine	Daubeny
Bertin	Corbett	Daniell
Berneville	Chaundos	Devise
Bellewe	Chaworth	Druell
Bevery	Cleremaus	Devaus
Bushell	Clarell	Davers
Boranville	Chopis	Dodingsels
Browe	Chaunduit	Darell
Belevers	Chantelow	Delaber
Buffard	Chamberay	Delapole
Bonveyer	Cressy	Delalinde
Boteville	Curtenay	Delahill
Bellire	Conestable	Delaware
Bastard	Cholmeley	Delavaehe
Brasard	Champney	Dakeney
Beelhelme	Chawnos	Dauntre
Braine	Comivile	Dcsny
Brent	Champaine	Dabernoune
Braunch	Carevile	Damry
Belesuz	Carbonelle	Daveros
Blundell	Charles	Davonge
Burdett	Chereberge	Duilby
Bagott	Chawnes	Delavere
Beauvise	Chaumont	Durange
Belemis	Caperoun	Delahoid
Beisin	Cheine	Delee
Bernon	Curson	Delaund
Boels	Coville	Delaward
Belefroun	Chaiters	Delaplanch
Brutz	Cheines	Damnot
Barchampe	Cateray	Danway
Camois	Cherecourt	Dehense
Camvile	Cammile	Devile
Chawent	Clerenay	Disard
Chauncy	Curly	Doiville
Conderay	Cuily	Durant
Colvile	Clincls	Drury
Chamberlain	Clifford	Dabitot
Champernoun	Courtency	Dunsterville

Dunchampe	Flamvile	Gurney
Dambelton	Formay	Giffard
Estrange	Fitz Eustach	Goverges
Estutevile	Fitz Laurence	Gamages
Engaine	Fornibaud	Haunte ney
Estriels	Frisound	Haunsard
Esturney	Finere	Hastings
Ferrerers	Fitz Robert	Hanlay
Folvile	Furnivale	Haurell
Fitzwater	Fitz Geffrey	Husee
Fitzmarmaduke	Fitz Herbert	Hercy
Flevez	Fitz Peres	Herioun
Filbert	Fichet	Herne
Fitz Roger	Fitz Rewes	Harecourt
Favecourt	Fitz Fitz	Henoure
Ferrers	Fitz John	Hovell
Fitz Philip	Fleschampe	Hamelin
Filiot	Gurnay	Harewell
Furniveus	Gressy	Hardell
Furnivaus	Graunson	Haket
Fitz Otes	Gracy	Hamound
Fitz William	Georges	Harcord
Fitz Roand	Gower	Jarden
Fitz Pain	Gaugy	Jay
Fitz Auger	Goband	Jeniels
Fitz Aleyn	Gray	Jerconvisse
Fitz Rauff	Gaunson	Janvile
Fitz Browne	Golofre	Jasperville
Foke	Gobion	Kaunt
Frevile	Grensy	Karre
Front de Boef	Graunt	Karrowe
Facunberge	Greile	Keine
Fort	Grevet	Kimaronne
Frisell	Gurry	Kiriell
Fitz Simon	Gurley	Kancey
Fitz Fouk	Grammori	Kenelre
Filioll	Gernoun	Loveny
Fitz Thomas	Grendon	Lacy
Fitz Morice	Gurdon	Linneby
Fitz Hugh	Gines	Latomer
Fitz Henric	Grivell	Loveday
Fitz Waren	Greneville	Lovell
Fitz Rainold	Glatevile	Lemare

Levetot	Mare	Monhaut
Lucy	Musegros	Meller
Luny	Musarde	Mountgomerie
Logevile	Moine	Maularde
Longespes	Montravers	Menere
Loverace	Merke	Martinast
Longchamppe	Murres	Mare
Lascales	Mortivale	Mainwaring
Lovan	Monchenesy	Matelay
Leded	Mallory	Malemis
Luse	Marny	Maleheire
Lotorell	Mountagu	Moren
Loruge	Mountford	Melun
Longuevale	Maule	Marceaux
Loy	Monhermon	Maiell
Lorancourt	Musett	Morton
Loions	Menevile	Noers
Limers	Mantenevant	Nevile
Longepay	Manfe	Newmarch
Laumale	Menpincoy	Norbet
Lane	Maine	Norice
Lovetot	Mainard	Newborough
Mohant	Morell	Neiremet
Mowne	Mainell	Neile
Maundevile	Malcluse	Normavile
Marnilon	Memorous	Neofmarch
Moribray	Morreis	Nernitz
Morvile	Morleian	Nembrutz
Miriell	Malevere	Otevell
Manlay	Maudut	Olibef
Malebraunch	Mount Marten	Olifant
Malemaine	Mantelet	Osenel
Mortimere	Miners	Oisell
Mortimaine	Mauclerke	Olifard
Muse	Mouchenell	Oriuall
Marteine	Movet	Orioll
Mountbother	Meintenore	Pigot
Mountsoler	Meletak	Pery
Malevile	Manvile	Perepount
Malet	Mangisere	Pershale
Mounteney	Maumasin	Power
Monfichet	Mountlovel	Painell
Malcherbe	Mawrewarde	Pecche

Pavey	Rie	Sent Barbe
Pevrell	Rokell	Sent Vile
Perot	Risers	Souremount
Picard	Randvile	Soreglise
Pinkenie	Roselin	Sandvile
Pomeray	Rastoke	Sauncey
Pounce	Rinvill	Sirewast
Pavey	Rougere	Sent Cheveroll
Paifre	Rait	Sent More
Plukenet	Ripere	Sent Scudemore
Phuars	Rigny	Toget
Punchardoun	Richemound	Terey
Pinchard	Rochford	Tuchet
Plaey	Raimond	Tracy
Pugoy	Souch	Trousbut
Patefine	Shevile	Trainell
Place	Sencheus	Taket
Pampilioun	Senclere	Trussell
Percelay	Sent Quentin	Trison
Perere	Sent Omere	Talbot
Pekeny	Sent Amond	Touny
Poterell	Sent Legere	Traies
Peukeny	Somervile	Tollemach
Peccell	Siward	Tolous
Pinell	Sansovere	Tanny
Putrill	Sanford	Touke
Petivoll	Sanctes	Tibtote
Preaus	Savay	Turbeville
Pantolf	Saulay	Turvile
Peito	Sules	Tomy
Penecord	Sorell	Taverner
Prendirlegast	Somerey	Trencheville
Percivale	Sent John	Trenchelion
Quinci	Sent George	Tankervile
Quintiny	Sent Les	Tirell
Ros	Sesse	Trivet
Ridell	Salvin	Tolet
Rivers	Say	Travers
Rivell	Solers	Tardeville
Rous	Sent Albin	Turburville
Rushell	Sent Martin	Tineville
Raband	Sourdemale	Torell
Rond	Seguin	Tortechappel

Trusbote	Verland	Venicorde
Trevel	Valers	Valive
Tenwis	Veirny	Viville
Totelles	Vavurvile	Vancorde
Vere	Veniels	Valenges
Vernoun	Verrere	Wardebois
Vescy	Uschere	Ward
Verdoune	Veffay	Wafre
Valence	Vanay	Wake
Verdeire	Vian	Wareine
Vavasour	Vernoys	Wate
Vendore	Urnall	Watelin
Verlay	Unket	Watevil
Valenger	Urnafull	Wely
Venables	Vasderoll	Werdonell
Venoure	Vaberon	Wespaile
Vilan	Valingford	Wivell

A.—There was another table setting forth the chief of William's captains by the title of their estates which they held in Normandy: such as Robert, Erle of Mortaigne; Le Seigneur d'Episnay; Le Seigneur de Longueville; and a few only by any surname. I do not know whether you will receive much entertainment from looking over a bare list of names; but to the lovers of pedigree the catalogue, in its way, is without doubt a curiosity.

P.—At a cursory glance we perceive that about one-third part of these names no longer exists in England: are we to conclude that all persons bearing the same surname as the remainder are descended from these "gentlemen of marque?"

A.—The vanity of most would gladly impose such a belief; but the truth is, that not twenty pedigrees can be properly authenticated to the period of the conquest. The fictions of the Herald's Office have always been the sport of satire: how uncertain must be the links which would sustain such a chain of evidence,

is apparent when we consider that surnames, though in use with the Normans as terms of distinction, were not at that time, nor for some generations after, commonly hereditary; and then not at once, but by degrees, as their utility became recognised.

F.—Amongst the curious odds and ends of Thomas Hearne,^a is this descent of the family of Cognisby; which, if the author could have been guilty of satire, we might suppose was meant in ridicule of the Battle Abbey roll:

“ William de Cognisby
Came out of Britany,
With his wife Tiffany,
And his maid Manfas,
And his dogge Hardigras.”

This ancient writing of parchment, says honest Thomas, is esteemed by the family as amongst their most precious monuments.

P.—But I see no greater honour in French or Norman blood than in English of the same antiquity; and as all the Conqueror's soldiers could not have been gentlemen, many of them indeed being the very scum of Europe,^b an old Anglo-Saxon ceorle is just as respectable an ancestor as one of these freebooters: where indeed Norman blood gives a title to large landed property, there is something to boast of.

A.—To trace a real Anglo-Saxon descent is next to impossible; as with that people surnames at the conquest were nearly, if not quite, unknown: all deeds having been signed by them with a single Christian name, as “ I, Edmund, have granted,^c &c.,” and in Domesday Book the few Saxons yet retaining their lands, or described as holding them under Edward the Confessor, are designated by the Christian name only:

^a Præfat. ad Fordun.

^b Order. Vital.

^c Selden. Notes in Eadmer.

which indeed is the case with a considerable number of the Norman tenants; and the name being latinized, it is somewhat uncertain to which nation it belonged: as Herbrandus, Hervæus, Ilbodus. Indeed the possessing a surname at all might be considered for a century after the conquest as an evidence of Norman descent; for when Henry I. was desirous of having his natural son Robert married to a great heiress, the lady refused on this ground:

“ It were to me a great shame
To have a lord withouten his twa name.”^a

Whereupon his father gave him the name of Fitz Roy, and afterwards created him Earl of Gloucester.

P.—But though the Battle Abbey roll should be deemed a defective evidence, is the similarity of names with those recorded in Domesday Book a sufficient authority to consider their possessors as the genuine descendants of those who came in with the Conqueror?

A.—Only to the select and fortunate few, whose ancestors possessing vast estates, have left memorials in the shape of legal documents; but as even the great barons or tenants in chief did not leave the same surname to the various branches of their posterity, we may conclude that nothing can be more futile than the generality of claims to such remote ancestry.

F.—Of the seven hundred tenants in chief amongst whom the lands are divided in Domesday Book, not two hundred are distinguished by surnames; the remaining names being those of ecclesiastical persons, or titles of honour, or of office, or single Christian names. It is remarkable that some of these surnames, though very large holders of land, are not inserted in the Battle Abbey roll. The insertion of names in the

^a Chron. of Robert of Gloucester.

roll which are not in Domesday Book has been already accounted for by the artifices of the monks of Battle.

P.—As most persons, except such as are connected with a title or the possession of a large estate, know little of their progenitors beyond three or four degrees, making about one hundred and fifty years in point of time, the subject of names and descents is attended with such obscurity and confusion, that the privilege of talking all manner of nonsense is frequently assumed when family claims are the topic. I have heard it asserted that a dark complexion and black hair bespeak a Norman origin, whilst a fair skin and light eyes are of Anglo-Saxon derivation.

F.—Such a notion must be ridiculous, as both races are of common descent from the ancient Germans, whom Tacitus^a describes as having “*truces et cærulei oculi, rutilæ comæ* :” which means fierce and blue eyes, with something very like carrotty hair; William Rufus derived his name from this circumstance; even the present inhabitants of Normandy are of a lighter tint than the more southern French. Most of the high-born personages of the court of Henry the Eighth, painted by Holbein, the earliest authentic portraits of the English nobility, are remarkably fair; so that a distinction of the two races from their complexion must fall to the ground.

A.—The distinction by surnames has a little better foundation: those evidently of French extraction, except the protestant refugees of a century and half ago, in all probability “came in with the Conqueror,” or in the subsequent connexion of England with the French provinces; though it is impossible for the most part to trace out the individual from whom they are derived. The best

^a De Mor. Germ.

and most ancient names in England are those in Domesday Book with the particle *de* before them, designating them to be the owners of certain places in Normandy: as Albericus *de Vere*, Radulphus *de Pomerey*, Rogerus *de Lacy*. In that age the descendants of such proprietors continued the name only with the possession of the land; had a new family acquired the property, they would probably have assumed the name of the estate: as was the case till very recently in France, to the great confusion of hereditary claims. Names were at first assumed also from the place of nativity, as well as from patrimonial possessions: as *D'Evreux*, *Tankerville*, *Mortimer*, in Normandy; and from innumerable places in England, as *Essex*, *Windsor*, *Sydenham*, and the like: indeed there is no parish or river but what has furnished a surname.

F.—All surnames must originally have been significant of something; though the meaning, *parce detorta*, may have now become difficult to find out.

A.—Various names were derived from offices, as *Le Dispenser* (or steward), *Marshal*, *Forester*, *Reeve*, *Butler*, *Priest*, *Deacon*; trades and occupations have imposed many, as *Potter*, *Smith*, *Webster*, *Taylor*, *Wheeler*; qualities of the mind or body several, as *Bold*, *Proud*, *Wise*, *Long*, *Short*, *Strong*, *Whitelock*; beasts, birds, and fish, have provided many, as *Lion*, *Lamb*, *Fox*, *Raven*, *Sparrow*, *Finch*, *Salmon*, *Herring*, *Whiting*; trees and flowers have been a fruitful source, as *Alder*, *Box*, *Pine*, *Rose*, *Lilly*, *Peach*, *Vetch*; colours have distinguished others, as *White*, *Black*, *Green*, *Rous* (that is, red,) and *Pigot* (or speckled;) parts of the body some, as *Head*, *Legge*, *Foot*; seasons or days in which the bearer was born, as *Summer*, *Winter*, *Christmas*, *Day*, *Holiday*, *Munday*; situation of dwelling several,

as Hill, Wood, Field, Church, Poole,—which anciently being often prefixed by *at*, have in some instances produced Atwood, Atwell, Atmore; others have an *s* added, as Groves and Gates.

P.—This latter addition seems often to have been made to surnames derived from a Christian name, as Peters, Stephens, Williams.

A.—The surnames derived from Christian names are numerous, and particularly from such as were in use both with the Normans and Anglo-Saxons at the conquest, and which are to be found in Domesday Book, as Alan, Bagot, Crouch, Godwin, Hamon, Howard, Osborne, Torold. Some are diminutives, as Terry, from Theodoric; Cole and Collet, from Nicholas; Hall, from Harry: and by adding an *s* we have Wills, Dicks, Sams, and Jacks; but more have been formed by adding son to the Christian name of their father, as Richardson, Davison, Wilson, Johnson. Many strangers settling were named from their country, as Picard, Scot, Gascoign, Bigod—for so the French called the Normans, because at every other word they were accustomed to swear by God.^a

P.—I am afraid that too many branches of this family are yet remaining.

A.—Till very recent times the Welsh had no hereditary surnames, but the son took the father's Christian name in addition to his own; this was precisely the case with the Irish Mac, and also at first with the Norman Fitz. In Domesday-book, Robert Fitz-Richard means merely the son of Richard; the son of Robert would be called, if so he were christened, Ralph Fitz-Robert; and the son of Ralph perhaps John Fitz-Ralph, if each party did not take a surname from a manor or some other cause.

^a Camden, Remains.

The modern Fitz-William, Fitz-Herbert, and such ancient sounding appellations, did not become hereditary till more than a century after the conquest. Many names given in merriment have remained in families, as Mauduit, for ill-taught; Maleverer, that is *malus leporarius*, for ill-hunting the hare; and one that held land by tenure, to say a certain number of paternosters for the souls of the kings of England, was called Paternoster. In short, there is nothing in heaven above or on earth beneath but what has afforded a surname; even both God and Devil: the first being probably a contraction of Godfrey, the other a corruption of the Norman D'Evile.

F.—The Welsh had a curious way of retaining the names of their progenitors: in the reign of Henry the Eighth, a gentleman was called in a court of law by the name of Thomas ap William, ap Thomas, ap Richard, ap Hoel, ap Evan, ap Vaughan, and so on up to Cadwallader, the last British king; but being advised by the judge to forsake that old manner, he took the name of Mostyn, from his principal mansion, and left it to his posterity.

A.—A remarkable instance of the decline of human greatness is stated by Sir Robert Cotton, who in the reign of James the First, relates that he saw in Cheshire a true Plantagenet holding the plough. But those persons who bear the name of an ancient baron are not to conclude necessarily that they partake of his blood; as it often happened that the vassals took the name of their lord: the Scottish clans are an instance of this; and very high sounding names have been conferred by accident; a foundling exposed at the door of the church of St. Mary Somerset, in London, was baptized by the parish with the name of William Somerset.

P.—By some such process, the unfortunate Chatterton, the son of a sexton at Bristol, derived his own pedigree from the Sieur de Chauteautonne, of the house of Rollo, the first Duke of Normandy; and that of his friend, Mr. Stephens, the pewterer, from Fitz-Stephen, son of the Earl of Aumarle, in 1095, son of Odo, earl of Blois and lord of Holderness. But that such pretensions were always the subject of ridicule, we have an instance in Shakspeare, who makes his drunken tinker, Christopher Sly,^a boast in a blundering way, that the Slys came in with Richard Conqueror.

A.—That the generality of pedigrees traced to the same early period are nearly as imaginary, let an instance of the diversity of names in the same family suffice. Soon after the conquest, William Belward, lord of the manor of Malpas, had two sons; the elder, David, took the name of Le Clerc, on account of his learning; and left also two sons, the elder of whom called himself William de Malpas, after the name of his manor; the second son was Philip Gogh, a Welsh term for red, such being his complexion. Gogh had three sons; the eldest of these took the name of Eger-ton, the second of Goldborn—both from their places of dwelling; and the third was called Goodman, for his excellent qualities. The younger son of the founder of the family left also three sons: the two elder took the names of De Cotgrave and De Overton, from their estates; and the third being of small stature, was called Richard Little; whose two sons were known by the names of Thomas Kenclerc and John Richardson.^b

F.—Enough has been proved to show that pedigree hunting, through such an inextricable maze, deserves to be reckoned amongst those “foolish questions and

^a Taming of the Shrew.

^b Camden, Remains.

genealogies which are to be avoided." 'The oldest families of England must be content, amidst the mutability of human affairs, to consider five hundred years a sufficient period of antiquity; few indeed, according to the testimony of such antiquaries as Spelman, Dugdale, and Camden, reaching even so far.

A.—And it may tend to abate the vanity of these select few, that such common names as Cook, Clarke, Chamberlain, Leach, Fisher, Barber, evidently derived from offices, appear in Domesday Book as Cocus, Clericus, Camerarius, Medicus, Piscator, Tonsor; which persons in all probability left these names to their posterity, who thus stand as fair a chance, and much good may it do them, of having "come in with the Conqueror," as even the Arundels and the Talbots. But it is time to leave "the commodity of good names" recorded in the roll of Battle Abbey, and return to the transactions of the founder of that memorable structure.

P.—We left William in full possession of the English throne, and the nation in apparent satisfaction at his government.

A.—At the expiration of not more than six months from the battle of Hastings, the king took the strange resolution of returning to Normandy, with the principal nobility of England as hostages for the peace of the kingdom in his absence. These persons were much admired by the Normans for their comeliness, their long hair, and their richly embroidered silken mantles.* It has been suggested that the motive for this extraordinary step was a latent expectation that the English would be provoked into an insurrection by the oppres-

* Gul. Pict. Ord. Vital.

sion of the Norman soldiers, and thus afford a pretext for new and extensive forfeitures.

F.—But is it just to attribute to William upon mere conjecture such an atrocious design?

A.—We can scarcely suppose that a person of William's acknowledged good sense could be actuated merely by the vain desire of displaying to his ancient subjects the trophies of his new magnificence: and the result of his absence was, that a revolt did take place; which on its suppression was followed by a confiscation of the estates of many of the disaffected English, who were becoming sensible that by their too easy submission they had incurred the contempt of their conquerors.

P.—Besides, no conduct could conciliate those who were determined to destroy.

A.—The history of the reign of the Conqueror is little else than a succession of revolts, followed by chastisements so severe, that at its end few if any considerable estates remained in the possession of an Englishman.

F.—One instance of disinterestedness deserves notice: Gilbert Fitz-Richard, a Norman captain, would accept of no land by way of recompense, saying, that he followed William from duty, and that he was not to be tempted by stolen goods; and he returned into Normandy, to enjoy his moderate but just inheritance.^a

A.—Earl Edwin (1068,) on the refusal of William to bestow his daughter in marriage upon that nobleman, as he had promised,^b took up arms, with his brother Morcar, in the expectation of assistance from Scotland, Wales, and Denmark; but before any judicious arrangement could be concerted, the king, with

^a Order. Vital.

^b Ibid.

his usual vigour, assailed the unprepared earls; who were thus compelled to throw themselves upon his mercy: their lives and estates were spared for the present, but the possessions of all their followers were confiscated. Another attempt of invasion, by the sons of the late King Harold^a (1069,) was speedily crushed; but an opposition of the Northumbrians, in conjunction with some Scottish and Danish Auxiliaries, completed by its failure the ruin of those English who had hitherto escaped from the grasp of the oppressor.

F.—The want of concert amongst the leaders, in the earlier stages of English history, cannot fail to strike the most careless observer.

A.—The revolt of the Northumbrians was attended with circumstances calculated to alarm the most settled government; it began with an attack upon Robert de Comyn, governor of Durham, whom the insurgents put to death, with seven hundred of his followers.^b This example animated the inhabitants of York to slay likewise their governor, Robert Fitz-Richard; and they besieged in his castle William Malet, to whom the command had devolved. To provide for the safety of the citadel, Malet set fire to some neighbouring houses; the flames quickly spreading, reduced the greater part of the city to ashes. Amidst the confusion of the scene, the exasperated citizens, aided by the Danes, carried the castle by assault, and put the garrison, amounting to three thousand men, to the sword.^c

P.—The success of such an attack would provoke a milder temper than fell to the lot of William.

A.—It proved the signal of insurrection to many other parts of England. Hereward, a valourous East Anglian nobleman, long the favourite of the nation,

^a Gul. Gemet.

^b Hoveden.

^c Order. Vital.

took shelter in the isle of Ely,^a and thence made frequent inroads on the neighbouring country; the counties of Somerset and Dorset were in arms; and Edric the forester calling in the assistance of the Welsh borderers laid siege to Shrewsbury. But this general effort of the English to recover their liberties was soon dissipated by the vigour and policy of William, who first detached the Danes from the confederacy, by offering them large presents, and the privilege of plundering the coast on their retreat; all the English leaders, except Hereward, thus discouraged, made submissions; and Malcolm arriving too late with his Scottish forces, was obliged to retire. The king becoming undisputed master, to incapacitate the Northumbrians from giving further disturbance, ordered the whole extent of that fertile country extending between the Humber and the Tyne to be laid waste: the houses were reduced to ashes; the cattle driven away; and the inhabitants, lingering about their ancient dwellings, perished miserably in the woods from the effects of cold and hunger. Not less than one hundred thousand persons are said to have been thus sacrificed to the barbarous policy or revenge of the Conqueror.^b Eighty years after this event, William of Malmesbury relates that the country still remained barren and desolate.^c

P.—This seems to be stretching the power of the sword to its last extremity.

A.—The people having now given such conclusive, though impotent, proof of their animosity, William resolved, by confiscating their estates, to reduce them to a condition in which they should be no longer formidable: the forfeited lands he either annexed to the royal demesnes, or conferred with the most profuse bounty

^a Ingulph.

^b Order. Vital.

^c De Gest. Angl. lib. 5.

on his Norman followers.^a And thus the ancient and honourable families of the kingdom were reduced to beggary, and disappeared. William indeed seemed to pass beyond the limits of mere policy: a great deal of temper only can account for some of his tyrannical proceedings.^b

F.—It is remarkable that one of William's supposed severities, though of universal belief, is of very doubtful credit,—the curfew, ordaining fire and candle to be extinguished at the early hour of eight, at the sound of a bell. This regulation is mentioned by none of the ancient historians earlier than Polydore Virgil, who wrote in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and who consequently is no authority. The only passage from which such a piece of tyranny can be inferred, is in William of Malmesbury,^c who merely relates that Henry the First restored the use of lanterns to the palace, which had been discontinued by William Rufus.

A.—Even granting the existence of the curfew, it may be pardoned as a regulation of police, yet observed in some monasteries on the continent. But William entertained the difficult project of exterminating even the English language: he commanded that in all schools throughout the kingdom the youth should be instructed in the French tongue only;^d the pleadings in the supreme courts of justice, and the laws themselves, were in that dialect; which as the community did not understand, it is obvious how powerful an engine of oppression they were capable of becoming.

P.—This reminds us of the Roman tyrant, who promulgated his laws in so small a character, and placed them in so lofty a situation, that they could not be read by the people.

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^b Hoveden.

^c De Gest. Ang. lib. 4.

^d Ingulph.

A.—The Norman language too, at this period, was none of the best, it being a mixture of the old French, combined with many words of Danish or German origin; whereas the Anglo-Saxon was at least a language unmixed and pure. But the attempt was too mighty even for the power of William the Conqueror to succeed in; yet the practice continuing for three centuries, shews how entirely the English were considered as an inferior and conquered people.

F.—The terms ‘conquest’ and ‘conqueror’ have been absurdly made a sort of test of principle by party historians, as if English liberty were less valuable or less sacred, because acquired by successive struggles against the overwhelming tyranny introduced by the Norman invader. These writers are desirous of explaining the word ‘conquest’ as implying merely the acquisition of territory by other means than the common course of inheritance, equivalent to the lawyers’ technical term—by purchase.

A.—But of the many hundred princes who have acquired territory in this way, who besides William ever retained the appellation of Conqueror? In modern times, neither the Prince of Orange nor the Elector of Hanover came to the English throne by descent; but no one ever thought of so designating these sovereigns. The great authority for the latinity of the middle ages, Du Cange, interprets the word *conquæstus*, by its present military meaning. In what light the companions of William considered it, we may learn from an old record, in which Robert D’Oily and Roger D’Ivry came, *ad conquæstum Angliæ*,^a as sworn brothers, to divide between them whatever they might obtain. A rhyme, you will say, is but a sorry argument, yet a very ancient

^a Kennet, Parochial Antiquities.

Leonine verse thus truly expresses the sense of the word conqueror as applied to William:

“Rex est Anglorum, bello conquestor eorum.”^a

F.—The facts, are much too notorious to admit of any other conclusion, though supported by such respectable authorities as Spelman and Blackstone, and even granting that the word *conquæstus* may sometimes mean a simple acquisition.

A.—William came into the kingdom with a declared hostile intention; he maintained his authority against the expressed sense of the people by the sword alone; he acted as absolute master of the natives, whose wishes and opinions he totally disregarded; he stripped them of their estates; and so universally reduced them to a state of meanness and poverty, of servitude and sorrow, that the very name of Englishman, which in various subsequent periods has been so glorious, became then a term of reproach; even so late as the reign of Richard I. if a Norman was accused of any thing which he thought dishonourable and chose to deny, he said, “What! do you imagine that I am an Englishman?”^d And many generations elapsed before a family of Saxon pedigree attained the rank of a baron of the realm.

P.—However antiquaries, then, may dispute about a word, it would appear by the fact, that the subjection of England after the battle of Hastings followed as completely as that of Greece after the sack of Constantinople by Mahomet the Second; and it may be questioned whether the Turks ever inflicted a punishment on the Greek people of equal severity as the desolation of Northumberland by William.

A.—Much misconception has arisen from considering, that as part of the municipal law of the Anglo-

^a Brompton, p. 962.

^b H. Hunting, lib. 7.

^c Brompton.

^d Giraldus Cambrensis.

Saxons remained, liberty remained also: but it was not from the non-observance of the old laws, either civil or criminal, which rendered the situation of England so deplorable; the Norman despots evinced no particular dislike to the Saxon code; indeed the strict provisions of its police, in making the inhabitants of a district responsible for the conduct of each other, became an admirable system of espionage. William even assembled at London twelve men from each province,^a who delivered upon oath the ancient customs of the country, which, collected into a digest, he published in the French tongue, proclaiming them to be the laws of his cousin Edward the Confessor.^b

F.—The subsequent clamour for two centuries therefore, by the people, for the laws of Edward, meant not so much the restoration of a particular code, as a relaxation of the feudal burdens, and a mild and equitable system of government, equally desired by the Normans themselves as by the native English. But the long continuance of the cry, as well as the various successive charters, plainly proves that the conquest was considered as destructive to the liberties of England.

P.—As William professed so much veneration for the church, did the English ecclesiastics escape his oppressions?

A.—The revolution in the church was equally violent and equally disadvantageous to his English subjects. Before the conquest, though the clergy willingly admitted the rank of the Pope, they had not much idea of his right of interference in their affairs; but William allowed the Pontiff to send a legate to England, for the purpose of extending the papal claims; and by his assistance the Primate Stigand, with the rest of the bishops and abbots, were deposed, under the pre-

^a T. Rudborn, *Anglia Sacra*, vol. 1. 269.

^b Ingulph.

tence of irregularities committed against the holy see. These persons either fled the kingdom, or passed the remainder of their lives in obscurity or imprisonment; Stigand lived some years in confinement, and pretending poverty, denied himself the necessaries of life; but it was discovered that he carried a key about his neck which opened a depository of infinite treasure.^a One bishop only, Wulstane of Worcester, a prelate of inoffensive character, retained his preferment, and that in consequence of a miracle: being deprived by the synod, he refused to deliver his pastoral staff to any but the person from whom he received it; and going to the tomb of Edward the Confessor, he struck it so deeply in the stone, that none but himself was able to pull it out.^b

P.—The vacancies in the church were doubtless replaced by foreign ecclesiastics.

A.—Certainly not by English; it being a fixed rule to promote no native to any place of trust or honour.^c The primacy was bestowed upon Lanfranc, a Milanese monk, celebrated for his learning and zeal for the holy see.

F.—It was this prelate who composed a treatise in favour of the real presence, which was loudly applauded.

A.—And which in fact is marked with that acuteness and subtilty which distinguish the learning of his age. If such a nonsensical doctrine were capable of being supported by reason, and not by quibbling, Lanfranc would be found by no means an imbecile defender.

P.—Did the doctrine of transubstantiation first appear in the church at this period?

A.—A fugitive and volatile tendency to that opinion had prevailed for three centuries, which though ne-

^a Gul. Malmesb. De Gestis Pontif.

^b Brompton.

^c Ingulph.

glected by the Greek church, now became fixed and palpable in that of Rome. Berenger, archdeacon of Angers, had taught with much offence in his school of theology (1050,) that a substance which, if eaten too much of, would cause indigestion, could not be other than an aliment; that a liquid which, if taken in too large a quantity, would inebriate, was a real liquor; and that it was physically impossible for the same body to be present in a thousand places at the same time.

P.—Common sense would call these nothing more than irrefragable truisms.

A.—It is but just that you should hear how they were refuted. “We are able to say with truth,” replies the archbishop, “that the body of our Lord in the eucharist is the same which came out of the Virgin, and that it is not the same: it is the same as to its essence and to the properties of its genuine nature; and it is not the same as to the species of bread and wine. Thus it is the same as to the substance, and it is not the same as to its form.” Notwithstanding the air of ridicule with which the matter is thus represented by a French wit,^a it comes extremely near the truth of the case: I have looked at the treatise of Lanfranc,^b and can vouch for its verisimilitude.

F.—How much more sensibly is the subject treated by a Saxon archbishop, Ælfric, the predecessor of Lanfranc, between 995 and 1005; who, in a sermon still extant,^c explains the mystery of the eucharist as “a pledge and a figure,” in a way entirely conformable to the reformed doctrine; and to which neither wit nor reason can make an objection.

^a Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*.

^b *Opera Lanfranci, adversus Berengarium Turonensem, de Corpore et Sanguine Domini, liber.*

^c Bede, *Hist. Eccles. Notis, Wheeloc.*

A.—The doctrine of purgatory, so well sketched out in the Sixth *Æneid* of Virgil, was also about this period introduced to the church. The Cardinal Peter Damien reported that a pilgrim, returning from Jerusalem, was cast by a tempest on a certain island, where he found a benevolent hermit, who told him that the place was inhabited by devils, and that its neighbourhood was infested with horrible flames, in which were plunged the souls of the departed; and that these devils ceased not to howl and cry out against St. Odillon, the abbot of Cluni, their mortal enemy, whose prayers were continually rescuing many souls from their clutches.^a The see of Rome, with its usual adroitness, seized on this story; and practising on the fears and affections of mankind, converted it, by inventing the doctrine of indulgences, to an enormous source of revenue. In addition to these opinions, to which the understanding of the English did not make much resistance, a decree was issued by the Pope, excommunicating all clergymen who retained their wives. The legate assembling a synod,^b it appeared that the younger part of the priesthood, contrary to expectation, cheerfully complied with the command, whilst the chief opposition was found amongst those more advanced in years. A sort of compromise took place: the bishops henceforth were to ordain no person without exacting a promise of celibacy; but the married priests, except they belonged to cathedral or collegiate churches, were permitted to continue their connubial enjoyments.^c Amongst other meditated encroachments, the Pope sent William a letter, requiring the tribute of Peter pence, and the fulfilment of a promise to do homage for the kingdom of England; the king replied, that the

^a *Essai sur les Mœurs.*

^b *Hoveden.*

^c *Spelman, Concil.*

money should be remitted, but the homage he had never promised, nor was in the least inclined to perform.^a

F.—William, resolving to recognize no will but his own, subjected the clergy to the same feudal claims as were imposed upon the rest of the kingdom;^b the bishops and abbots were obliged, in time of war, to furnish the king with a certain number of knights and military tenants, proportioned to the extent of their lands: in vain both the pope and the ecclesiastics inveighed against these new and unbefitting services, as they termed them: William's power was so well established, that superstition itself, in that age at the zenith of its influence, was compelled to submit to his authority.

P.—How did these military services, the mention of which is so constantly occurring in this period of English history, differ from the Anglo-Saxon customs?

F.—This can be understood only by an explanation of the feudal law, the operation of which had so baleful an effect on some countries for many centuries, and which in others still remains the convenient instrument of oppression.

A.—The origin of this remarkable system, like so many other institutions of antiquity, is lost in a cloud of obscurity; the principal feature of the feudal law is the considering an estate of lands as proceeding from the gift of some superior, and held on certain conditions, which, if not performed, the land becomes liable to forfeiture. Nothing like this is discoverable in the customs of the Greeks and Romans, but the practice was introduced by the northern nations who overran the Roman empire; whether it arose from the peculiar necessity in which these barbarians found themselves, when established in the midst of their enemies, or whe-

^a Eadmer, p. 6. Notes, Selden, p. 164.

^b Mat. Paris.

ther it existed in their native regions, is a matter of uncertainty.

F.—In the practice of the ancient Germans who occupied their lands in common, and changed them every year;^a there is certainly no trace of an estate upon condition. When the Franks first settled in Gaul, they seized a part of the conquered country and divided it amongst themselves; in this precarious situation it became necessary that these new proprietors should be always ready to defend their possessions by the sword; consequently, so early as 562, Chilperic, king of France, exacted a fine from certain persons who refused to accompany him in an expedition against his enemies;^b and here seems to be the first instance of tenure by military service.

A.—This notion once promulgated so gradually strengthened itself, that by the age of Charlemagne (800) every man in France who possessed sixty acres was expected to be in a condition to march against the enemy; and Louis le Debonnaire (815) granted certain land to some Spaniards who had fled from the Saracens, on the express condition that they should serve in the army like other free men.^c

F.—Though the practice of subjecting land to military service cannot be traced to the ancient Germans, yet, the idea of a prince surrounded by his vassals, or dependents, as certainly can. We are told by Tacitus that their leaders were attended by certain warlike followers, whom he terms *Comites*, and whose rank was honourable; in their primitive state the reward of their fidelity were arms, horses, military ornaments, and the enjoyment of a rude hospitality: but settling in rich and newly conquered countries, the leader bestowed more substantial recompense in the endowment of land,

^a Tacitus de mor. Ger.

^b Gregor. Turon, lib. 5.

^c Robertson's History of Charles V. proofs, &c. Vol. I.

which, cultivated by the subdued inhabitants, as serfs, or slaves of the soil, became highly valuable: an estate thus granted was called a fee, or benefice,^a meaning a stipendiary reward; it was originally given during pleasure, then for life, then it became hereditary, first in the direct, then in the collateral, and at last in the female line.

P.—Were the various services and incidents attached to the feudal law imposed at once, and did they prevail to the same extent in the different countries of Europe?

A.—Like most other national burthens, they were gradually introduced, but as no records of sufficient antiquity remain, it is impossible to point out the precise era of each. The Lombards, in the north of Italy, were the first people who received the feudal law as a methodized code; and Rollo the Dane finding it already established in Normandy, adopted it with additional severities, as the means of his own security and aggrandizement; his descendant, William, importing this code of tyranny with his conquering sword into England, almost realized, in fact, the feudal theory, by becoming the proprietor of nearly all the lands in his dominion: that he could not retain them all, is very true, the claims of his companions in arms being too importunate, but he reserved no less than one thousand four hundred and twenty-two manors for his own share,^b and granted the remainder as pure and genuine fiefs; those proprietors who received lands immediately from the crown were called tenants in chief, or barons, who frequently portioned out their estates to inferior persons, on somewhat the same conditions with which they held of the king; they thus became mesne, or middle lords, though still continuing vassals of the monarch, and each barony resembled, in some sort, a little kingdom.

^a Montesquieu, lib. 30. c. 16.

^b Domesday-book.

P.—But did not the Anglo Saxons, springing from the same origin, adopt the same institutions?

A.—As the Saxons nearly extirpated the ancient Britons, they found it unnecessary to secure themselves against immediate aggression, and the tenure by military service was consequently unknown: but as men must necessarily defend their possessions, the proprietors of estates were subject to the *trinoda necessitas*,^a or threefold obligation, of repairing highways, building castles, and repelling invasions, to which the Danes added the heriot, or the best horse, at the decease of the owner, with a sum of money to be paid to the king.

P.—These practices betray their origin, but I do not see why the mere notion of estates being held on condition should be considered as oppressive?

A. When the principle of actual personal service was commuted into a pecuniary assessment, all the advantages of the feudal system were destroyed; what perhaps was, or might have been, a compact of mutual liberty and security, became a source of infinite vexation and oppression: in addition to *scutage*, the literal meaning of which is shield money, and which was but the fair price of the exchange for military service, and settled by the national council, the tenant was called upon for *aid* when the king or lord paramount knighted his eldest son, or married his daughter, or required ransom if taken in war; the heir, if of full age, was subject to a *relief*, or *primer seisin*, which was a heavy composition for taking up the estate of his ancestor, and if he were a minor he lost the whole profits of it during his infancy, being in *wardship* to the king.

P.—Really a very encouraging beginning.

A.—“When he came to his own,” in the words of

^a Selden, Jan. Ang.

an old author, “ after this state of wardship, his woods decayed, houses fallen down, arable lands exhausted, and the stock wasted and gone,” he was yet to pay a year’s profits as a fine, for suing out his *livery*, or taking possession, also the price of his *marriage* if he refused such wife as the lord had bartered for, and twice as much if he married another woman; then, to make his poverty more conspicuous, was added the untimely and expensive honour of *knighthood*; and when by these deductions the unfortunate young man was compelled to sell his patrimony, he was not allowed even that poor privilege without paying an exorbitant fine for a *licence of alienation*.^a

P.—A more complicated and irritating state of slavery can scarcely be imagined.

F.—Blackstone^b would fain have us believe that the feudal system was assented to by William’s Norman barons, as a basis merely for the defence of the nation; and that, good innocent souls, they had no notion of considering their estates or benefices as encumbered with any other burden than pure military service, till they found themselves entangled in the subtle constructions of the lawyers; but it is not reasonable to suppose that the Conqueror bestowed these lands on other conditions than what existed in the general practice of the feudal law, and the particular custom of Normandy, where it is admitted most of these grievances prevailed.^c

A.—William the Conqueror, that he might accurately ascertain his own demesnes and those of his tenants in chief, ordered a survey to be made of all the lands in England;^d this undertaking was begun in 1081, and

^a Blackstone, Com. Vol. II. book 2, cap. 5. ^b Com. Vol. II. book 2, c. 4.

^c Hoüard, Anciennes Loix des Francois, conservés dans les Coutumes Angloises, vol. 1.

^d Sax. Chron. Ingulph.

was six years in completing; the result is comprised in Domesday-book, one of the most remarkable monuments of antiquity possessed by any nation.

P.—The name I suppose is Saxon, signifying judgment, from which there was no appeal.

A.—Its Latin titles were various, as, *Liber Judiciarius*, *Liber Censualis*, *Rotulus Wintoniæ*: it has been supposed that the Dom-book of Alfred was the prototype of this work, but as there are no traces of such a survey having been made by that great monarch, we are rather to conclude that his Dom-book was a code of laws. William's Domesday-book is still preserved; it was formerly kept in the Exchequer, under three locks, but at present in the Chapter-house at Westminster, where it may be consulted, on paying six shillings and eight-pence as a fee, that indispensable requisite, to the proper officer.

P.—In what form does this ancient record appear; and what are its contents?

A.—The work is comprised in two volumes, one a large folio, the other a quarto; the first is written in three hundred and eighty-two double pages of vellum, in a small but plain character, each page having a double column; some of the capital letters, and principal passages, are touched with red ink, and some have strokes run across them, as if scratched out: this volume contains a description of thirty-one of the midland and southern counties of England; the other volume is in quarto, it is written in four hundred and fifty double pages of vellum, but in a single column, and in a large but fair character; it contains the counties of Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk. Towards the beginning of each county there is a catalogue of the great landholders or tenants in chief. The contents of

Domesday-book are now rendered accessible by its having been printed in two folio volumes, (1783,) by order of government.

F.—Of the counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Durham, there is no description, probably owing to their recent devastation.

A.—It was intended to comprise the state of every town and village, every “locum, lacum, lucum,” in each county, the name of the person who then possessed the lands, and who in the time of Edward the Confessor; how many freemen, villeins, cottagers, and slaves, and how many hides of land were in each manor; how much woodland, meadow, and pasture; how much it paid in taxes in King Edward’s days, how much at the time of the survey; how many mills and fish ponds, and some other particulars.^a But the greatness of the design occasioned many omissions, and from the partiality of the commissioners, the survey is by no means so exact as some historians represent it: the intention of the king being chiefly to ascertain the extent of his own demesne and those of his tenants in chief, the subfeudatories, or under-tenants, are in many counties not mentioned, and hence several towns, now considerable for wealth and commerce, are totally omitted, the pre-tropolis for one, as not being held of the king.

F.—Much land too, which has since been cultivated, must have been at that time mere waste.

A.—From these, and other circumstances, no judgment can be formed of the number of the people in England; and indeed the paucity of information to be gleaned from this celebrated work is somewhat surprising; its chief value is its authority when a doubt arises whether certain lands be ancient demesne; if they can be found under the title of *terra regis* in Domesday-

^a Inguiph.

book, they are so adjudged, but the contrary if they are set down under the name of a private lord or subject; as a specimen of the nature of the entries, the following extract may suffice, in the county of Dorset, translated from the contracted Latin in which the book is written.

XLVI. “Lands of Matthew de Moretania.—Matthew de Moretania, holds Melburn of the king; Johannes held it in King Edward’s time, and it was taxed for five hydes; there is land for four ploughs; in the demesne are two ploughs, with one villane, and nine bordars (or cottagers), a mill pays thirty-two pence; there are five acres of meadow and six acres of coppice wood; it was and is worth a hundred shillings.”

P.—It must be owned that the information thus exhibited is exceedingly meagre and unsatisfactory.

A.—The whole number of the tenants in chief amounts nearly to seven hundred; very few Saxon names are found in the list, and those holding but small estates; the ecclesiastical tenants are at least two hundred and fifty, and their possessions were of a relative proportion, as out of sixty thousand two hundred and fifteen knights fees into which the kingdom was divided, twenty-eight thousand one hundred and fifteen fell to the share of the church.

P.—Of what extent was a knight’s fee?

F.—Five hides of land, but the hide itself was variable, according to the quality of the soil; it consisted, generally, of a hundred acres: an entire barony contained thirteen knight’s fees, and a third part: as every owner of a knight’s fee was compellable to find a man completely armed, the king had thus at all times an army of sixty thousand soldiers ready at his command.

A.—The survey of the kingdom for Domesday-book was the cause of much jealousy and offence to the people, as they concluded it was meant to be the foundation of some new impositions. As Domesday-book was not begun till twelve years after the resistance of the malcontents at York (1069,) we have anticipated our narrative. When William by his cruel devastation in the northern part of the kingdom had, according to the expressive phrase of the Roman historian, literally made a solitude, and called it peace, the two earls, Edwin and Morcar, unable to endure their humiliating situation, again flew to arms, but with a still more unfortunate result: the latter escaped by flight, but Edwin was slain by his followers. When the head of this gallant and beautiful youth was presented to William,^a tyrant as he was, he yet bestowed “the tribute of a generous tear” to his memory. The Conqueror, now completely triumphant, entered Scotland, and received from Malcolm in person the usual homage paid to the English crown (1072).

P.—Such then was the result of the last effort of the unfortunate English to shake off the Norman yoke.

A.—From his new subjects William received no further disturbance, but during his absence on a visit to Normandy (1073,) a conspiracy took place amongst the Norman nobility, who were displeased with some of his arbitrary measures. In this affair Earl Waltheof, who had married Judith, the king’s niece, and who was the last Englishman admitted for several generations to any share of power or trust, had unwarily engaged: he was betrayed by his wife, and the insurrection being speedily crushed, he was condemned and executed,^b his large possessions becoming forfeit (1075).

^a Order. Vital. Brompton.

^b Order. Vital.

F.—The lady, though she did not as a principal, decapitate with her own hands, like her namesake in the Apocrypha, yet she had no objection to become an accessory.

A.—Several of the fugitive Normans fled into Scotland; and from them are supposed to be derived many families of French descent at present found in that country. The remainder of William's life was passed chiefly in Normandy; but his tranquillity received some interruption from the ambition of his eldest son Robert, surnamed Gambaron, or Courthose, from his short legs, who aspired to independence, and who demanded immediate possession of that dutchy; which the king refused, remarking that he intended not to throw off his clothes till he went to bed.^a This prince was of a fiery disposition, and becoming jealous of his brothers, William and Henry, who by a more dutiful behaviour had acquired their father's affection, he converted a trifling quarrel, which originated in a mere youthful frolic, into a dangerous civil war. The incident which occasioned the dispute being nothing more than the younger brothers taking a fancy to throw some water from an upper apartment of the castle of L'Aigle, in Normandy, upon Robert and his companions, who were walking in the court below.^b Robert construing the circumstance as a public affront, drew his sword, and running up stairs, threatened instant revenge. The whole castle was filled with tumult, which the king had the greatest difficulty to appease; but the prince complaining of his father's partiality, immediately left the court, and sought the assistance of some turbulent barons; till at length, encouraged by the King of

^a Chron. de Mailros.

^b Order. Vital.

France, he took shelter in the castle of Gerberoy, where he was soon closely besieged.

F.—Under its walls a remarkable rencontre ensued: two knights, concealed by close armour, engaged in a desperate conflict, when one of them, being dismounted, called for assistance; the voice discovered to the astonished prince (for such was the other,) that it was the king whom he had narrowly escaped killing.^a Penetrated with remorse and horror, he threw himself at his father's feet, and entreated forgiveness; but William's resentment was implacable; his military pride was wounded, and he pronounced a bitter curse, which he could never be persuaded afterward to retract.

P.—This is what may be called a dramatic situation; hard must have been the parent's heart which did not at such a moment relent.

A.—A reconciliation, by the interposition of mutual friends, was at length effected, and Robert was entrusted with a command in England. The severity of the king's temper appears in another instance: Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, the uterine brother of the Conqueror, allured by a foolish prediction to hope for the papacy, had amassed an immense treasure, and was upon the point of departing with it for Rome. William, unwilling to see so much money carried out of the kingdom, commanded his brother's arrest; but found so great scruples in his officers, on account of Odo's ecclesiastical character, that he was in person obliged to seize that prelate; who pleading his immunities, was answered by a nice and I suppose not very satisfactory distinction, that he was arrested, not as Bishop of Bayeux, but as Earl of Kent.^b

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 3.

^b Ibid.

F.—I am afraid that it is only with the stronger party that a quibble will pass for an argument; though in this case its validity may be admissible.

A.—The bishop continued in prison, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Pope, during the whole remainder of his brother's reign. William's unfeeling disposition was anew evinced in the formation of the New Forest^a (1081:) for this purpose he laid waste an extent of country in Hampshire for nearly thirty miles, expelling the inhabitants, seizing their property, and even demolishing churches and convents, without making the least compensation for the injury. At the same time he prohibited all his subjects from hunting in any of his forests; and enacted that the killing of a deer, or even a hare, should be punished with the loss of the eyes of the delinquent.^b He loved those savage beasts, says the Saxon Chronicle, as much as if he had been their father; and he forced the poor people to obey his forest laws under loss of life.

P.—I am afraid that a remnant of the same spirit still exists in the modern game laws.

A.—Blackstone calls them a bastard slip of the old forest laws of the Conqueror. In the Saxon times every man was allowed to start and kill any sort of game upon his own estate, though not to pursue it into the royal chaces;^c but the fiction of the feudal law vesting the entire property of the soil in the king, no man was permitted to sport at all, without an express licence from him. King John once laid an interdict upon the fowls of the air, forbidding any of them to be taken throughout the whole kingdom.^d We may easily imagine what a hardship such a restriction would appear in

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^b Knyghton.

^c Leg. Canut. 77. Wilkins.

^d Mat. Westm.

an age which possessed scarcely any other than field diversions.

F.—Something of a similar hardship yet remains, in the interdiction of field sports, except to a class of persons possessing a certain species of property. I can easily understand why no man suffers an intruder upon his premises; but why any one obtaining the consent of the owner of the land should not be permitted to enjoy such amusements, is to me, I must own, quite unintelligible.

P.—Perhaps somewhat of the gratification consists in the exclusion of the multitude; the happy few enjoying the advantage, considering themselves as the privileged caste, of the genuine Norman stock, who “came in with the Conqueror.”

A.—Much of the mischief I apprehend has arisen from endeavouring to establish as fixed and permanent property that which the laws of nature and the general feelings of mankind will never so recognise.

F.—The Roman jurisprudence certainly knew of no such restraint upon that vague dominion over the wild inhabitants of the various elements, which seems to have been given by the Deity to mankind at large, soon after the creation.

A.—The end of the Conqueror's greatness at length approached: a coarse witticism gave rise to a war, which in the event deprived him of life. William, now become corpulent, was confined by sickness to his bed; upon which the King of France, Philip the First, expressed his surprise that his brother of England should be so long in being delivered of his big belly. William, enraged at this levity, swore “by the brightness and resurrection of God,” his usual oath, that as soon as he was up he would present so many lights at

the church of Notre Dame, as would give little pleasure to the King of France;^a alluding to the practice of women at that time carrying a torch to church after child-birth. On his recovery he devastated the isle of France, and set fire to the city of Mante. As he rode to view the scene, his horse treading on some embers, gave a sudden start, which threw the king on the pommel of the saddle; a severe bruise was the consequence, which causing fever, in a few days terminated his life at the monastery of St. Gervas,^b in his sixty-third year, September 9th, 1087.

P.—Some moralists would trace the hand of retributive justice in such an incident as this.

A.—The last moments of William were not unembittered. Sensible of the approach of death, he was stricken with remorse for those horrible cruelties which he had committed in England; and he endeavoured to make atonement by presents to churches and monasteries, which bounty the ecclesiastics recommended as the most efficacious mode of pacifying a troubled conscience; he commanded the state prisoners to be released; and he also entertained his courtiers with discourses on the vanity of earthly greatness, of which they gave the strongest proof, by every one of them abandoning his remains as soon as he expired.^c

F.—A further exemplification took place at his interment. As the ceremony proceeded, the corpse being placed on a bier in the church, a voice from the crowd exclaimed, “He whom you have just praised was a robber; the very land on which you stand is mine; by violence he took it from me; and in the name of God I forbid you to bury him in it.”^d Nor did the service

^a Mat. Paris. Mat. Westm.

^b Order. Vital.

^c Ibid.

^d Gul. Malmesb. lib. 3. Order. Vital.

terminate till the prelates paid Fitz-Arthur (for such was the name of the speaker,) sixty shillings for the grave, with promise of full value for the land.

P.—Fitz-Arthur did not mistake the character of the deceased.

A.—Set historical portraits are seldom satisfactory, the painter being usually more anxious to exhibit a sparkling though confused contrast of opposite qualities, than a sober resemblance. The great lines of William the Conqueror's character it is however impossible to mistake: they are discoverable in every transaction of his life: in ability and vigour of mind, he seems not to have been equalled, certainly not surpassed, by any of his successors: his cruelty was commensurate only with his avarice; his vehement temper he could control when he found dissimulation would better promote his interest: the profoundness of his views is evinced by the long continuance of his institutions, which unfortunately were calculated to secure an arbitrary power to the crown, rather than happiness to the people. William was of temperate habits; religious, according to the mode of the times; not deficient in learning, and an encourager of it in others; of a strong and healthy frame, and, as it may well be supposed, of a stern and haughty countenance.^a Skilled in all martial exercises, and as we have seen, passionately addicted to the chase, his talents and success made him the most powerful and wealthy monarch of his age, and have acquired him a renown coeval with the existence of the British monarchy.

P.—It is a curious subject of conjecture what would have been the state of England had the conquest by William never taken place.

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 3.

F.—That the feudal system imposed much severe suffering on all classes for several centuries, is undisputed; many of its burthens continued even so late as the reign of Charles the Second. But though the Anglo-Saxons were free from these impositions, yet the nobles being few in number, possessed such a disproportionate share of power, that it is probable the Anglo-Saxon constitution would have degenerated into something like a Polish aristocracy. Whether a House of Commons would have sprung up amongst them by some equally fortunate accident as it did with the Anglo-Normans, is a matter of speculation; but it is only such an institution which could have protected the Anglo-Saxons from the overwhelming power of the great, as at length it happily rescued the English from the tyrannicā prerogatives of the crown.

A.—The inferior courts of justice continued the exercise of their functions after the conquest with little alteration; but the separation which William introduced, of the spiritual from the temporal power, in the county courts, was a serious evil, as the reputation of these tribunals thus declining, their business was usurped by the king's justiciaries; and the practitioners of the *aula regis*, or king's court, being Norman ecclesiastics, they introduced that spirit of chicane, subtlety, and delay, which in a great measure is still the reproach of English law, especially in what are called courts of equity.

P.—This reminds me of Cowper's verses, speaking of England at this period:

“ Then priests, with bulls and briefs, and shaven crowns,
And griping fists, and unrelenting frowns,
Legates and delegates, with powers from hell,
Though heavenly in pretension, fleeced thee well.
And to this hour, to keep it fresh in mind,
Some twigs of the old scourge are left behind.”^a

^a Vol. I, Expostulation.

Which twigs, the poet slyly adds, in a note, may be found at Doctors' Commons.

F.—I wish they could be found only there.

A.—Amongst the minor grievances of this reign was the introduction of the Jews, whom the king appointed a place to inhabit and occupy. William, on his death-bed, bequeathed Normandy to his eldest son Robert; England to the decision of God, but his wish was that it might fall to his second son, William; and to Henry, his third son, he left only five thousand pounds of silver, who remonstrating that the money was of no use unless he had a house to live in, was recommended by his father to be patient, as his fortune would one day surpass that of both his brothers.^a

F.—But some chroniclers gravely assert, that it was not likely that the spirit of prophecy should be communicated to such a remorseless tyrant.

A.—William's queen was Matilda, the daughter of Baldwin, count of Flanders, a princess of merit, and who retained during her whole life the affection of her husband. An extraordinary account is given of their courtship. The lady at first refused William's addresses, objecting that she would never marry a bastard; which giving great disgust to the lover, he lay wait for Matilda as she returned from mass at Bruges, and seizing her, tore her clothes, and both beat and kicked her, *pugnis, calcibus calcaribus verberat.*^b Having performed this feat, he rode off with impunity. The damsel of course took to her bed; but when interrogated by her father concerning the matter, such is the unaccountableness of ladies' tastes, she declared that she would never have any other husband than the Duke of Normandy. Besides his three sons, William left several daughters,

^a Order. Vital.

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^b Chron. Turonen. apud Bouquet, tom. 11, p. 368,

one of whom, Adela, was married to the Count of Blois, and became the mother of King Stephen. Another daughter, Agatha, was of so devout a turn, that her knees had become callous through perpetual prayer; and what was remarkable, the chief drift of her petition was, that she might depart this life a virgin;^a which happily came to pass, for being contracted to Alphonso, king of Galicia, she died on her journey to that country.

P.—The liberties of the English being lost, were their manners improved by the conquest?

F.—The Normans were certainly the politer people, and had made a greater progress in civilization: they dressed more elegantly, they built more magnificently, they were more delicate in their victuals and in the choice of their wines. William the Conqueror, after he was peaceably settled on the throne, sent agents into different countries to collect the most rare and admired dainties.^b The almond milk, provided for the monks of Croyland on fish days, in a later age is spoken of by their historian with rapture.

A.—Perhaps the art of cookery itself received improvement by the introduction of the feudal tenures, one of the few benefits which they ever conferred. In some great families an estate was annexed to the office of cook, which became hereditary;^d we even meet with estates that were held by dressing a particular dish of meat. Though the Normans had a taste for profuse and expensive banqueting, they were a more sober people than the Anglo-Saxons, who would carouse whole days and nights without intermission,^e sometimes quaffing large draughts to the honour of the Virgin Mary, the twelve apostles, and various saints in the calendar;^f

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^c Hist. Croyland contin.

^e Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^b Joan Sarisb.

^d Fleta, lib. 2, c. 75.

^f Bartholinus, lib. 2, c. 12.

they are accused of having gone intoxicated into the field at the battle of Hastings, the loss of which, say some historians, was a judgment on their intemperance.

P.—The hours of repast with the Normans differed materially, it may be supposed, from those of modern times.

A.—Not so materially in effect as in name, as the following old French jingle may explain :

“ Lever a cinq, diner a neuf,
Souper a cinq, coucher a neuf,
Fait vivre d'ans nonante et neuf.”

“ To rise at five, to dine at nine,
To sup at five, to bed at nine,
Makes a man live to ninety-nine.”

If we substitute breakfast for dinner, and dinner for supper, the hours of eating very much correspond with those of the present day ; it is true that the advantages of early rising were better known, or at least more generally practised, by the Normans.

DISSERTATION V.

SECTION II.

WILLIAM RUFUS - - - A.D. 1087.

A.—WHEN the Conqueror lay on his death-bed, his second son, William, surnamed Rufus, or red, from the colour of his hair, hastened to England with a letter to Lanfranc, the primate,^a and at the decease of his father was speedily crowned. The nobles were much dissatisfied, foreseeing the difficulty of retaining their estates both in England and Normandy, by preserving a double allegiance, and several of them united in a conspiracy in favour of Duke Robert, but which was speedily defeated by the promptness and vigour of the new king,^b qualities by which he was eminently distinguished; and he now thought of returning the compliment to Robert, by invading Normandy; but an accommodation taking place, the brothers united their arms against Prince Henry, who having purchased a part of Robert's dominions, called the Cotentin, or country of Constantine, retired dissatisfied to the strong fortress of St. Michael's Mount, and infested the neighbourhood with his incursions.^c

P.—There seems to have been but a small portion of brotherly love between these interested princes.

A.—Robert, always distinguished by too facile a disposition, evinced an affection on this occasion which is not without interest. Henry being nearly reduced from the scarcity of water in the citadel, Robert suffered him to be supplied, and also sent him some pipes of wine for his own table. Being reproved by William for this ill-timed generosity, he replied, that their strife was

^a Gul, Malmesb. lib. 4.^b Order. Vital.^c Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

not of such a deadly nature as to require their brother's life: "Where," said he, "shall we find another when he is gone?"^a And William too, though he inherited more of his father's severity, was not incapable of a generous action: riding out alone to survey the fortress, he was attacked by two soldiers, and dismounted; one of the assailants drawing his sword to dispatch him, William exclaimed, "Hold, knave, I am the King of England."^b The warrior suspended his blow, and raising William from the ground, with many professions of respect, he received a handsome reward from the monarch, who said, "Henceforward thou shalt be my soldier." A short time after this incident, Prince Henry was obliged to capitulate, and the future King of England wandered about for some time in great poverty.^c Robert and William again quarrelled,^d and a fresh conspiracy of the turbulent barons broke out in England, which was soon repressed. But the interest of such petty commotions was altogether absorbed by the crusades, which now engrossed the attention of Europe, and which by an acute historian are described as the most signal and durable monument of human folly that has ever appeared in any age or country (1096).

P.—But we will forgive the folly, since it has been the source of so much delightful poetry and romance.

F.—No country in Europe was so little affected as England by the epidemic fury of the first crusade: the barons having recently obtained their estates, were afraid to leave them to the precarious protection of the times; and the king, who to an inordinate rapacity united a very sound judgment, took no further interest in the event than how he should best convert it to his own advantage.

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4. ^b Ibid. ^c Order. Vital. ^d Hen. Hunting.

A.—A tempting opportunity was soon presented. Duke Robert early enlisted himself in the rank of the crusaders; but being unprovided with money to appear at the head of his vassals in a manner suitable to his dignity, he sold his dominions of Normandy and Maine, which indeed he had not talents to govern, for the trifling sum of ten thousand marks,^a to his brother William, and set off for the Holy Land with the full buoyancy of enthusiasm in the pursuit of glory.

F.—It certainly argues great strength of mind in William, not to have been drawn into the universal vortex.

A.—To account for this indifference, William has been accused by the ecclesiastics of profaneness,^b not to say infidelity: he was accustomed openly to maintain that prayers to saints were vain and impertinent;^c and at the death of Lanfranc, who, notwithstanding his devotion to Rome, appears to have been a man of great wisdom, learning, munificence, and charity, he kept the primacy and many other sees vacant for several years. On this occasion the clergy presented a petition, requesting that he would give them leave to use a form of prayer in the churches, “that God would move the heart of the king to choose an archbishop.” William carelessly answered, “that they might pray as they pleased, and he would act as he pleased.”^d

P.—It surely required some nerve in the clergy to make such a request.

A.—At length, in a fit of sickness, he bestowed the primacy on Anselm, a Piedmontese by birth, and abbot of Bec, in Normandy, much celebrated for his learning and piety, who a long time refused, or affected to refuse, the proffered honour, the pastoral staff being absolutely

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

^b Gul. Neubrig.

^c Eadmer.

^d Ibid.

forced into his clinched hand.^a "The church of England," said this ecclesiastic, "should be drawn by two oxen of equal strength, the king and the archbishop; but if you yoke me, who am a weak old sheep, with the king, who is a mad young bull, the plough will not go straight."^b This homely comparison proved very just; for Anselm resisted with such obstinate perseverance any further aggression against the revenues of his see, that it ended in a quarrel, which obliged the primate to leave the kingdom, and seek protection with the Pope, which exile lasted till the death of William Rufus.^c

P.—So far the archbishop's cause appears to have been just.

A.—On some minor points the king had the better argument: a declaration of William's, that "the bread of the church was most sweet and dainty, and fit for kings,"^d caused much offence to the clergy. The following story has been also given as an instance of his irreligion: a wealthy Jew, whose son had been converted to Christianity by the vision of a saint, presented the king with sixty marks, on condition that he would compel the young man to renounce his new faith. On being commanded to the royal presence, the convert strenuously resisted the monarch's desire, and wondered that he, a Christian king, should make such a request. The father, perceiving the hopelessness of the attempt, was anxious to have his money returned. "Nay," said William, "I have done my utmost, and deserved the whole reward; but to show my kindness towards thee, I will be content with only half, which sum you cannot in conscience deny me for my pains."^e At another time he sent for some learned theologians, and some Jewish rabbis, and bade them fairly dispute the question of

^a Eadmer.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

^d Camden, Remains.

^e Eadmer.

their religion in his presence, professing himself to be perfectly indifferent, and that he would embrace that doctrine which upon comparison should be supported by the most solid arguments.^a

P.—We cannot suppose that William had any other object than making both parties the subject of his profane ridicule.

A.—Yet he once gave an example of disinterestedness which deserves remembrance. As two monks were striving to outbid each other for a rich abbey, William observed a third standing by, of whom enquiring what he would give to be abbot? the monk replied, “Not one farthing; that his conscience would not suffer him to expend money in such a way, even if he possessed any.” The king then swore by “St. Luke’s face,” his customary oath, “thou alone deservest the dignity, and shalt have it for nothing.”^b After the departure of Robert for the Holy Land, some discontented Norman barons sought protection from the King of France. During the quarrel which ensued from this circumstance, William gave a remarkable proof of his decisive character. Whilst hunting in the New Forest, a messenger brought him intelligence that Heli de la Fleche, a powerful noble, had seized the city of Mans, but not the castle, which still held out. The king instantly sent the messenger back, with a charge to the besieged that he would be with them in eight days; at the same time he turned his horse’s head towards the sea-side, crying out, “He that loves me, follow me;” and arrived at Dartmouth that same evening. Being desirous to embark, the mariners were unwilling to put to sea, as the wind was tempestuous and contrary; but William telling them that they had never heard of a king’s being

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

^b Liber Cantuar. Camden, Remains.

drowned, compelled them to set sail.^a He arrived safely at Barfleur, and in a few days relieved the castle of Mans.

P.—Probably this was said in imitation of Cæsar, when placed in somewhat a similar situation.

A.—William having taken Heli de la Fleche prisoner at Mans, discovered in his treatment of that nobleman considerable greatness of mind; for in the exultation of success, jesting on the misfortune of his enemy, the count fiercely replied, that William had no reason to glory in an advantage obtained by surprise, adding that were he at liberty again, the king would find it no easy matter to conquer him: the victorious monarch, piqued at this defiance, set his adversary free upon the spot, exhorting him to do his utmost.^b

F.—Though William had never heard of a king that was drowned, he was presently to give an instance that one could be shot.

A.—That event certainly soon occurred. On the second day of August, 1100, after dinner, the king, with his brother Henry and a numerous retinue, hunted in the New Forest: towards evening, when the company were dispersed in pursuit of their game, a buck suddenly sprang up between the king and Walter Tyrrel, a French gentleman: the king it is said wounded the animal; and whilst he was holding his hand to intercept the rays of the sun, that he might observe his prey, he was pierced in the breast by the arrow of Tyrrel, which glancing against a tree, was changed from its direction. William expired without a groan; and Tyrrel immediately clapping spurs to his horse, escaped to France, and joined the crusade, as a penance for his involuntary crime.^c

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

F.—An old monk attributes this accident to the king's neglect of an admonitory dream, in which he felt that an extreme cold wind passed through his sides; but William contemning the warning, said, "They were no good Christians who regarded dreams;" yet, continues the relater, he found this too true, being shot through the side by Walter Tyrrel:^a and thus a doubt has been raised whether his death was accidental or designed. Tyrrel, perhaps from prudence, always denied his being the cause of the king's death in any manner whatever;^b and as the fact was never brought to legal enquiry, it rests in a little uncertainty: perhaps the arrow was shot at random by some unknown hand.

A.—Or perhaps not at random, William's tyranny having provoked many enemies. The story of the dream is variously related: William of Malmesbury^c says, that the king had passed a terrified night, and waking in horror, called for his attendants, and commanded them not to quit the chamber. A monk of Gloucester also had a vision relating to a broken crucifix, which he thought portended some evil, and which being told to the king, William exclaimed, "He dreams like a monk, give him a hundred shillings; do they believe me to be turned aside from my diversions, because an old woman dreams or sneezes?"^d Another forewarning, say several old monks,^e was given by the devil, who appeared in the New Forest, under a hideous form, threatening various evils to the king and the Norman race. It is singular that this spot,

^a Frag. Antiq. Hist. Franc. Pithæo Edit. Camden, Remains.

^b Suger, Abbat. de Vita Ludov. Grossi, Bouquet, tom. 12.

^c De Gest. Angl. lib. 4.

^d Order. Vital.

^e Sim. Dunelm. Ailred Rieval. Hoveden.

the monument of the Conqueror's cruelty, should have proved so fatal to his family: in the year 1081, his eldest son, Richard, a mere youth, was there either mortally wounded, or caught his death by an ague;^a and in 1100, another Richard, son of Duke Robert, was killed, like William Rufus, by the flight of an arrow.^b

P.—Did the English receive any mitigation of their sufferings during the reign of William?

A.—On the contrary they were rather increased. In addition to the feudal oppressions, this king imposed a variety of arbitrary fines on the most trifling occasions: many persons were severely amerced for making foolish speeches, or returning foolish answers; some for having short memories, or being ignorant of things which they could not possibly know.^c In all these extortions he was assisted by Ralph Flambard, a man of mean birth and abandoned character, who was made Bishop of Durham and chief justiciary of the kingdom. William Rufus was unprincipled and profligate, rapacious and profuse; but the violence of his temper, combined with a vigorous understanding, was better suited to the government of his turbulent barons, than the most refined artifice.

F.—As a proof of the heedless extravagance of William's disposition, a story is told that he once refused to wear a pair of hose, because they cost only three shillings; and he put on cheerfully a worse pair, when his chamberlain assured him they cost a mark, or thirteen shillings and fourpence.^d

A.—This monarch being unmarried, is the only instance since the conquest, of a King of England who,

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

^c Flor. Wigorn, p. 649.

^b Order. Vital.

^d Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

having completed his majority, died a bachelor. William was of a strong compact form, not tall, of a florid complexion, with red hair; his eyes differed in expression, if not in colour, and inspired great terror to the beholders when inflamed with anger.^a

F.—Historians commonly remark, that the monuments which remain of this prince in England are, the Tower, Westminster-hall, and London-bridge. But surely “Rufus’ bawling hall,” judging from its style of architecture, must be of a much later period.

A.—William added a spacious hall to the palace at Westminster, which remained three centuries; but the present structure was erected by Richard the Second. The account of the other edifices is not much more correct: the London-bridge constructed by William Rufus was of wood; the first stone bridge, consisting of nineteen arches, being begun by King John; and the “Towers of Julius, London’s lasting shame,” as a truly learned and elegant poet most absurdly calls them, were commenced by the Conqueror. The principal tower or keep being injured by a violent storm, was repaired and completed by William Rufus; its modern casing is of the age of Charles the First.

F.—The strange notion of attributing certain structures to Julius Cæsar, who by no possibility could be concerned in their erection, seems to have arisen from a vulgar opinion, that the circular form in building towers was adopted by that conqueror; and hence they were called Julietts. Such a tower, with the name so applied, is to be seen in the fine old baronial castle at Warwick.

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

DISSERTATION V.

SECTION III.

HENRY I. - - - - A.D. 1100.

A.—As William Rufus could leave no legitimate offspring, the crown devolved by right on his elder brother, Robert; but Prince Henry no sooner heard of the fatal accident which had befallen William, than he immediately galloped to Winchester, secured the royal treasure, and hastening with the money to London, was saluted king.^a

P.—It was surely very hard upon Robert to be twice deprived of his claims by the unprincipled intrusion of his younger brothers.

A.—Henry's title being founded on downright usurpation, he foresaw the necessity of endeavouring to acquire the affections of his people, and consequently he passed a charter,^b calculated to remedy some of the grievous oppressions with which his subjects, Norman as well as English, were burthened. This charter, though its provisions were never adhered to by the king, when his immediate purpose was attained, is yet remarkable, as being the model on which Magna Charta was afterward constructed; thus exhibiting a confession that the future rights of the subject were not, at least in theory, to be totally dependent on the sole will and pleasure of the crown; and thus commenced that struggle between the good and evil principle which, after the conflict of many centuries, elicited the happy fabric of the English constitution.

F.—Copies of this charter were sent to all the abbies, but an original no longer exists. It thus cu-

^a Order. Vital.^b Sax. Chron.

riously begins: "Know ye that, seeing by the mercy of God and the common assent of the barons of England, I am now crowned king:" not a word of the consent of the people. A very ancient transcript of the charter is in the Red-book of the Exchequer.^a Its principal provisions relate to the relaxation of some feudal burdens; and it ends with a general confirmation of the laws of King Edward, as if when liberty was fled, men could find an equivalent in law.

A.—Yet whilst Henry's fears continued, he governed with such mildness, that his subjects really felt a perceptible relaxation of the tyranny exercised by his two predecessors; and he much ingratiated himself with them by marrying Matilda,^b the niece of Edgar Atheling, and daughter to Malcolm the Third, king of Scotland. This princess, though not the heir of the Saxon line, having brothers who left a numerous posterity, yet she was become very dear to the English people on account of her connexion with that family.

F.—As a proof of the contempt in which the English were held by the Normans, Henry's marriage excited much displeasure with his barons, as disparaging to his dignity; and they derided the king and queen with the nicknames of Goodrick and Godiva.^c

A.—Matilda was educated by her aunt Christina, in the nunnery of Wilton; as she had worn the veil, some doubts arose as to the lawfulness of the marriage: and we may judge of the manners of that unhappy age, by her proving before a council of prelates, that she had entered into the convent, not with the view of professing a religious life, but for the sole purpose of security against the licentiousness of the Normans.^d This mar-

^a Introduc. to the Statutes of the Realm, vol. I.

^b Eadmer.

^c Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

^d Eadmer.

riage added much to the stability of Henry's throne, which indeed stood in need of some better support than his own pretensions. Duke Robert soon afterward arrived in Normandy from the east: the fame which this prince had acquired in the Holy Land, added to his native valour and generosity (though unfortunately he was always deficient in conduct,) had rendered him so popular, that many of the barons assured him of their support. He thus ventured to collect his vassals, and landed with a considerable force at Portsmouth; even the seamen composing Henry's fleet, which was sent to oppose him, deserted to the invader.^a

P.—A formidable crisis, it must be confessed.

A.—The two armies lay in sight of each other for some days, without coming to action; but Henry, with his usual policy, induced the Primate Anselm, whom he had recalled from exile, and to whose counsels he professed the utmost submission, to interfere as an arbiter between the contending parties. Anselm successfully negotiated with Robert to resign his pretensions to England for an annual pension of three thousand marks;^b and thus was Henry extricated from a situation of extraordinary difficulty and peril, without even striking a blow or being exposed to any hazard (1101).

P.—A pension was surely a poor equivalent for a kingdom.

A.—Though Robert was a prince of undoubted bravery, his disposition was light and inconstant. It is said that he refused the crown of Jerusalem,^c in favour of Godfrey of Bouillon, preferring the chance of his succession to that of England; and though this seems to have been the only judicious action of his life, yet

^a Order. Vital.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

^c Ibid.

such is the perverseness of opinion, that the historians observe he never throve afterward.^a It is too certain that, soon after his unsuccessful attempt against Henry, he so much neglected his government of Normandy, by falling into a course of dissolute pleasures, that his barons invited Henry's interference; with which request the king willingly complied; and assembling a large army, passed into that country, and entirely defeated Robert in a decisive battle near the castle of Tenchebrai (1106).^b

P.—Thus as William the Conqueror subdued England with his Normans, his son Henry retaliated, by subduing Normandy with his English.

A.—The consequences to the defeated sovereign were nearly as fatal in the latter case as in the former: Robert was taken prisoner, and was detained in custody during the remainder of his life, a period of twenty-seven years, in the castle of Cardiff; where, amidst the revels of buffoons and minstrels, this thoughtless heir of so much greatness little regretted that sovereign power, which he had so unprofitably employed, but of which he had been so unjustly deprived.

P.—Who cannot regret such a termination to the glories of the bold crusader, whom even Tasso has thought worthy of being commemorated as a leader?

“Normandi tutti, e gli ha Robèrto in cura
Che principe nativo è de le genti.”—GERUS. LIB. Canto 1.

F.—It is asserted by Mathew Paris, that Henry, provoked by an attempt of Robert to escape, deprived him of sight; but we may hope, for the honour of human nature, that it is not true.

A.—Yet the Count of Mortaign being imprisoned, had his eyes put out; which matter was kept secret

^a Mat. Paris.

^b Eadmer.

till the king's decease:^a but we may infer that such was not the case with Robert, from a gossiping story^b that Henry once trying on a splendid robe, rent the cape, it being made too narrow: "Notwithstanding this accident," said he, "it may fit Robert;" and he sent it to Cardiff: but the duke took so much to heart the indignity of wearing a cast-off garment of his brother's, that it caused his death.

F.—So much more keenly was a personal affront felt by Robert, than the loss of liberty, glory, and a kingdom.

P.—I well remember the monument of this prince in Gloucester cathedral, carved in heart-of-oak, representing him in armour, and exhibiting a singularly handsome countenance.

F.—But I fear its likeness is not much to be relied upon, as it is evident that this effigy is of considerably later date than the death of Robert.

A.—The battle of Tenchebrai, which proved so unfortunate to this prince, was likewise distinguished by another prisoner, illustrious at least by birth, Edgar Atheling;^c but Henry restored him to liberty, and settled on him a small pension, with which he retired to some obscure spot in England, and occupied with his hounds,^d died in extreme old age, totally neglected and forgotten.

F.—Nothing can be a stronger proof of the meanness of his talents, than that this sole remaining male of the Saxon line, Edgar Atheling, England's darling,^e as he was called in old ditties, should be allowed to live unmolested during the reigns of three violent and

^a Hen. Hunting. lib. 8.

^b Mat. Paris.

^c Sax. Chron.

^d Gul. Malmesb.

^e Mat. Paris. Vita Abbatis.

jealous usurpers, and be permitted to descend to his grave in peace.

A.—During the remainder of Henry's reign, no political events occurred of any importance; he maintained a tedious quarrel with Rome on the subject of granting investitures, or the power of filling the vacant benefices, which the Pope thought fit to claim, and which indeed his holiness had established as his right in Germany. After a long and violent struggle, a compromise took place, which to modern ears must seem ridiculous: the king was no longer, on the appointment of a bishop, to confer the ring and crosier, which were supposed to be emblems of the spiritual dignity; and the bishop was permitted to pay the usual feudal homage for his temporalities, which the king might, if he chose, refuse.^a Thus leaving the real power in the hand of the sovereign; a result so different from the usual practice of the court of Rome, that we may well admire the dexterity of the king in the transaction, though he has been blamed by some zealous protestants for resigning even the least portion of his ecclesiastical authority.^b

F.—A circumstance too occurred which had no tendency to further the claims of the holy see at this juncture: the Cardinal de Crema^c had been appointed legate much against the inclination of Henry; and this prelate called a synod at London, where, among other canons, a vote passed enacting severe penalties on the marriage of the clergy, whose wives he thought proper to call by the decent appellation of strumpets;^d but the next night it happened that the officers of justice, breaking into a disorderly house, found his Eminency in bed with a courtesan; which incident inflicted so much ridicule upon him, that he immediately stole

^a Eadmer.

^b Fuller.

^c Hoveden.

^d Ibid.

out of the kingdom. Some modern catholic writers wish to deny the truth of this story, on the ground of its being omitted by many cotemporary authors; but Henry of Huntingdon,^a himself a clergyman, in relating the fact, makes an apology for using such freedom with the fathers of the church, stating that it was notorious, and ought not to be concealed.

A.—King Henry, amidst all his greatness, did not esteem his throne entirely secure. William, known by the surname of Clito, son of Duke Robert, wandering through various courts in Europe, excited a very general sensation of compassion: Fulk, count of Anjou, in concert with Louis the Sixth, king of France, and the Pope Calixtus the Second, supporting his claims to the duchy of Normandy, occasioned Henry much disturbance; but the monarch found early means to detach the count from this combination, by contracting his own son William to a daughter of that nobleman;^b and abounding in riches, he so forcibly convinced the sacred Pontiff in a subsequent interview of the justice of his intentions, that Calixtus declared that, of all men whom he had ever seen, Henry was beyond comparison the most eloquent and persuasive.^c But the happiness of this prosperous sovereign was grievously interrupted by a domestic calamity truly pitiable. Having taken over his son, who had reached his eighteenth year, to be recognised as his successor by the states of Normandy, on his return to England, the king set sail from Barfleur; and the young prince embarked in a vessel called the White Ship, intending immediately to follow: he was accompanied by his natural brother Richard, and his sister the Countess of Perche, with her husband; the

^a Lib. 2.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^c Ibid.

Earl of Chester and his countess, the king's niece; sixteen other ladies of rank; together with one hundred and forty knights and nobles of the first quality.

P.—A splendid company indeed.

A.—The gay party amused themselves with dancing; and the prince had ordered so much wine to be distributed among the mariners, that the whole crew became intoxicated. In this situation their captain, Thomas Fitz-Stephen, eager to overtake the king, crowded every sail, and heedlessly ran the ship against a rock called the *Catte-raze*, when she immediately foundered. The prince was put into the long-boat; but on hearing the cries of his sister, he rowed back in the hope of saving her: so great a number of persons then rushed into the boat, that it immediately sank. Every soul who was on board the vessel perished, except one Berauld, a butcher of Rouen, who clung to the mast, and was taken up next morning by fishermen; the captain also took hold of the mast, but being informed by Berauld that the prince was drowned, he threw himself headlong into the sea.^a

P.—The view of so much youth, enjoyment, wealth, greatness, distinction, all perishing in a moment, is indeed appalling.

A.—The historians of English race,^b who relate this catastrophe, appear to commiserate very little the fate of their Norman masters, as they call it a manifest judgment of God upon the shameful vices, hitherto unknown to the English nation, practised by the young prince and his companions.

F.—But we might suppose that the young ladies, who equally perished, were without the reach of such invective.

^a Order. Vital.

^b Gervas. Cant. Brompton. H. Hunting. Epis. in Ang. Sacra, vol. 2.

A.—The monks probably recollected the prince's saying, that when he should be king, he would make the English draw the plough like oxen; so great was his aversion to the unhappy natives.^a The report of the disaster speedily reached England, but for three days was carefully concealed from the king, who remained in a state of the most tormenting anxiety. At length, when the fact could be no longer kept secret, and none of the courtiers were willing to be the messenger of such ill news, a boy properly instructed came into the apartment in tears, and falling at the king's feet, told him that the prince and all on board the *White Ship* were lost.^b Henry staggered, sank on the floor, and fainted. It is said that he never recovered his usual cheerfulness, or was observed afterward to smile.^c

F.—However overwhelming to a parent's feelings, the accident contributed to the increase of Henry's power: the persons, honours, and estates, of the heirs of most of the great men in England being thus at his disposal.

A.—The Count of Anjou, now loosened from his engagements, gave his daughter in marriage to William Clito. But the jealousy of the English monarch against that true heir of the Norman family, again formed a plan to detach the count from this new alliance, by the tempting offer of the king's only child Matilda, the widow of the Emperor Henry V., as a wife to the count's son Geoffrey, now a youth of sixteen.^d The match was not happy, as the haughtiness of the lady could ill brook the descent from an imperial palace to the castle of an earl; but it flattered the ambitious views of the Count of Anjou with

^a Knyghton. Brompton.

^c Brompton.

^b Order. Vital.

^d Gul. Malmesb. Novel, lib. 1.

the expectation that his family would one day ascend the throne of England, and which indeed came to pass.

P.—The injured William Clito thus seemed to be the perpetual sport of fortune.

A.—He had one favourable gale, though of short duration: the King of France put him in possession of the earldom of Flanders, which gave Henry much uneasiness; but this handsome prince, said to be equally avaricious and dissolute, soon after died from the effect of a wound. With singular command of temper, he wrote on his death-bed to Henry, entreating pardon for the trouble that he had given during his life, and requesting the indulgence of the monarch to those barons of Normandy who had supported his claims to the duchy. It is satisfactory to know that Henry had sufficient generosity to comply with the request (1128).^a

F.—Such an effort could not be very painful, as the event afforded a complete relief from well-founded inquietude; had William Clito survived Henry, he would probably have succeeded to the English throne, in spite of any testamentary bequest in favour of Matilda.

A.—About this period some Flemings sought refuge in England from an inundation that had befallen their country: Henry settled them in Pembrokeshire, for the purpose of repressing the incursions of the Welshmen.^b

F.—The district is still occasionally called Little England; and if the inhabitants were long a separate people, they are no otherwise distinguished at present than by some peculiarities in the dress of the women.

A.—The last four years in Henry's life were passed in Normandy, in the society of his daughter, who bore three sons, and to whom he compelled the nobility of

^a Gul. Gemet. lib. 8.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

both countries to renew their oath of fealty. The cause of the king's death was a fever, arising from eating too plentifully of lampreys;^a a favourite viand, but which always agreed better with his palate than his constitution. He expired at St. Dennis le Forment, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, and the thirty-fifth of his reign, December 1st, 1135.

F.—William of Malmesbury^b has allotted to this prince the praises of temperance and continence: but his death, caused by a surfeit, bears no very ample testimony to the first virtue; and surely the continence of the monarch cannot be very highly commended, who left no fewer than fifteen illegitimate sons and daughters, the mothers of whom were chiefly ladies of rank.^c

A.—The prosperous fortunes of Henry have induced historians in general to extol him beyond the quality of his virtues: in his conduct there is little for the moralist to praise, except in the undeviating severity with which he administered the laws; a real benefit, in that licentious age, to all classes of his subjects. In cruelty he departed not from the example of the two Williams, his father and brother: an unfortunate French minstrel, Luke de Barrè, having written some satirical verses against him, and falling into his power, the king would by no solicitation consent to his pardon, but deprived him of his sight by the revolting application of a heated iron basin.^d

F.—Another instance of Henry's stern resolution took place in his youth. During the disputes in Normandy with his brothers, Conan, a rich burgess of Rouen, being detected in a design of delivering up that city to William Rufus, Henry inveigled this unfortunate

^a Hen. Hunting.

^c Gal. Gemet.

^b De Gest. Angl. lib. 5.

^d Order. Vital.

person to the summit of the castle, and with his own hands flung him from the battlements,^a saying very coolly, "Traitors must not go unpunished."

A.—Nor must the long duration of Robert's captivity be forgotten. Henry possessed a handsome person, with an open and engaging countenance; dark and clear eyes, with thick hair; of moderate stature, and ample chest;^b his address was affable; his humour facetious; and he possessed so great a share of learning as to acquire the name of *Beauclerc*, or the scholar: the soundness of his understanding is conspicuous in all the transactions of his reign. This monarch was twice married: his second wife, *Adelais of Lovaine*, brought no issue; his first queen, *Matilda*, was long the delight of the English people, on account of her Saxon descent; and from the kindness of her heart she acquired the familiar appellation of the *Good Queen Mold*; which epithet was inscribed on her tomb.^c She is said to have been even too lavish of her bounty to the poets and minstrels of the day, so as somewhat to have exceeded her very ample revenue.

^a Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

^b Ibid.

^c *Anglia Sacra*, vol. 1.

DISSERTATION V.

SECTION IV.

STEPHEN - - - A.D. 1135.

A.—THOUGH Henry had bequeathed the whole of his dominions to his daughter, the Empress Matilda, yet from the anxiety which he evinced in compelling the barons to swear repeated fealty to that princess, he was probably well aware of the uncertainty of her succession, there having been no example of female descent in the Norman family, nor with the Anglo-Saxons, either in any of the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, or since they had been united into one monarchy. Egbert having left the crown to descend, in his homely Saxon phrase, by the spear side, not by the spindle side, consequently the barons, scarcely yet accustomed to the inheritance of females even in private fiefs, which had not entirely ceased to be considered as military benefices, were ready to assist, in that age of usurpations, a daring adventurer, who came forward with a specious pretence, a sharp sword and a long purse; such an one was found in Stephen, Count of Bologne, the second son of the Count of Blois, by his wife Adela, the daughter of William the Conqueror.^a

F.—Even to the show of legitimacy, Stephen could make no pretence, his elder brother being yet alive, content with his paternal inheritance.

A.—Stephen was in Normandy at the period of Henry's death, but, well aware of the extreme importance of striking the first blow, he hastened over immediately to England.^b By the assistance of his brother, the Bishop of Winchester, he secured the treasures of

^a Gul. Malmes. Novel. lib. 1.

^b Mat. Paris.

the late king, and in a short time was solemnly crowned at Westminster: few of the barons attended on the occasion, and those who took the oaths of fealty, made the conditions reciprocal; yet thus, by the mere ceremony of a coronation, Stephen proceeded to the exercise of sovereign authority.

P.—Did the partizans of Matilda quietly submit to such a flagrant usurpation?

A.—Robert, Earl of Gloucester, natural son to the late king, a man of capacity and integrity, was much attached to the interests of his sister Matilda; yet, however desirous he might be to excite an opposition, he was compelled to remain at peace, so extensively had Stephen insured the compliance of the nobility, by the liberal use of Henry's treasures.

F.—The policy of Henry in amassing them was thus strangely turned against the interest of his own family.

A.—The first attack was from Scotland; David, the king of that country, appeared against Stephen, at the head of an army, in defence of his niece Matilda's title, and penetrating into Yorkshire, committed the most barbarous ravages: this much enrag'd the northern nobility, who assembled an army at North Allerton, and in an engagement called the battle of the Standard,^a from a high crucifix being erected by the English on a waggon, they totally defeated the Scots with great slaughter, (1138): this success overaw'd the malcontents in England, and promised to give stability to Stephen's throne.

P.—As his three predecessors were equally usurpers with himself, such an expectation was not unreasonable.

A.—It was the misfortune of Stephen, that in order

^a Mat. Paris.

to ensure the support of the barons, he was compelled to grant them most exorbitant privileges, amongst which, the right of building and fortifying castles was not the least, and became the most dangerous and obnoxious: not less than one thousand one hundred and fifteen of these receptacles of licensed robbers were erected in the short space of nineteen years;^a and even the prelates aspired to the same immunity. Stephen, sensible of the mischief, was resolved to begin a reformation, and seized a castle belonging to Roger, the bishop of Salisbury;^b but he was not quite aware of the strength against which he had to contend.

F.—The rise of this prelate was remarkable: in the days of William Rufus he was a poor curate, in a village near Caen in Normandy: the King's brother Henry arriving thither, called for a priest to say mass, and Roger going to the altar, performed it with such celerity, that the attendants on Henry affirmed, that he, above all others, was a chaplain meet to say mass before men of war, because he had made an end when many thought he had but newly begun:^c thus recommended to Henry, he was protected by that prince, and speedily advanced to great promotion.

A.—Ecclesiastical pretensions were, in this age, carried so high, that the bishop of Winchester, though brother to the king, preferred the interests of his own order; and in a synod convened on the occasion, asserted the independence of the clergy,^d thus increasing the general discontent between the crown and the mitre.

F.—Had this quarrel not arisen, we have every reason to suppose that the mere possession of the crown

^a Mat. Paris.

^b Gul. Malmesb. Novel. lib. 2.

^c Godwin de præsul. Ang.

^d Gul. Malmesb. Novel. lib. 2.

by Stephen, would have been sufficient to defeat the claims of Matilda, however equitable.

A.—Invited by the rebellious clergy, that princess arrived in England, accompanied by the Earl of Gloucester, and a retinue of only a hundred and forty knights: she fixed her residence at Arundel castle, the gates of which were opened to her by Adelais, the queen dowager:^a here she was besieged by Stephen, who, either despairing to reduce the castle, or moved by the representation of Adelais, permitted her departure to Bristol. This was the first of a series of extraordinary escapes from difficult situations which afterward befel the Empress; and now being joined by several nobles of her own party, a civil war raged in every corner of the kingdom: the barons set no bounds either in their vengeance on each other, or in their oppressions of the people: the two competitors, dependent on the caprice of their adherents, were compelled to connive at excesses which they could not prevent; and thus universal disorder prevailing, the land remained untilled, and a grievous famine left whole villages without any inhabitant (1141).^b

F.—This picture of feudal times, it must be confessed, is not very alluring; and Stephen had enlisted a band of foreign soldiers, who appear to have surpassed the accustomed ferocity and licence of the age. This measure, though perhaps necessary to the desperate state of the king's affairs, gave great offence to the nobility, as well as his friendship for William D'Ypres, the leader of these dangerous mercenaries.

A.—The armies of the two parties marched and countermarched over various parts of the kingdom, with but small result: at length Stephen was taken

^a Gul, Malmesb. Novel, lib. 2.

^b Sax. Chron. Gul, Malmesb. Novel, lib. 2.

prisoner, when besieging Lincoln: he was conducted to Gloucester, and loaded with irons was there thrown into prison.^a Matilda's party now triumphed, but that princess gave much offence by the contempt with which she treated the petition of Stephen's Queen, and of several nobles soliciting the release of the captive monarch; and she assumed such intolerable airs of haughtiness to the Londoners, who pleaded for a restitution of their Saxon laws, that they broke into a sudden insurrection, from the danger of which Matilda only escaped, by hastily leaving the table, mounting a horse, and seeking safety in a precipitate flight.^b

P.—The lady's temper appears not to have been very capable of bearing prosperity.

A.—The empress was certainly a most disagreeable personage: proud, passionate, conceited, and so parsimonious, that Camden,^c very ungallantly terms her a niggish old wife, the English may be congratulated in not having come under her rule. The Bishop of Winchester being now supposed to repent his opposition to the king, Matilda resolved to surprise him in his castle at that city; but as she entered at one gate of the town, he departed at another: she sent him a peremptory order to attend the court now held in the castle; he answered, that he was getting himself ready, which indeed he set about with such effect, that the party who were the besiegers of Winchester, now in turn became the besieged, and were so pressed by famine, that Matilda and the Earl of Gloucester determined to escape; and one morning at dawn of day, under a strong escort, they left the castle: the princess luckily reached Devizes in safety; the Earl was not so fortunate, as he fell into the hands of the enemy.^d

^a Gesta, Stephani Regis.

^c Remains.

^b Gesta, Stephani Regis.

^d Gesta, Stephani Regis.

F.—Each party then in possession of its adverse leader, had its fair *quid pro quo*.

A.—After some negotiation the Earl was exchanged for the King, and the civil war raged with greater fury than ever. Matilda having a talent for adventure, not finding herself safe at Devizes, is said to have been placed on a bier like a corpse, and to have been drawn on a hearse to Gloucester.^a Should this story be doubtful, it is certain that soon afterward, she was besieged in Oxford, and as the place could not hold out against Stephen another day, she issued at a very early hour in the morning from a portal, attended by three knights, all clothed in white, it being a severe frost, and the ground covered with snow: the nearest centinel, who had been bribed, conducted her between the posts of the enemy; she passed the river on foot over the ice, and reached Abingdon:^b she at last retired into Normandy (1143), and Stephen's party again prevailing, the contest languished.

P.—At length then an interval of security and repose was found for Stephen.

A.—He did not enjoy much of either: at all times anxious to preserve the just rights of the English crown, he was continually harassed by petty, though almost unceasing conflicts with the nobility, or with the church. After some years had passed in the possession of a precarious authority, an alarming danger presented itself, in the person of Prince Henry, the son of Matilda, who now appeared in England, in his way to receive knight-hood from his great uncle, David King of Scots, (1149).^c This young prince early exhibited great marks of ability, and much excited the hopes of his own party: soon after his return he was invested with the Dutchy of Normandy, and his father dying, he took possession of

^a Brompton.

^b Gesta, Stephani Regis.

^c Hen. Hunting. lib. S.

Anjou and Maine, as his patrimony; and soon after marrying Eleanor (1152,) the heiress of Guienne and Poitou, he became a truly formidable competitor. In the year 1153 he invaded England with a considerable power, rallied his partizans round him, and a decisive battle was daily expected; but the nobility, terrified at the prospect of further confusion, interfered, and an accommodation was settled, in which it was agreed that Stephen should possess the crown for life, and that on his demise Henry should succeed to the kingdom.^a During the course of this negociation, Eustace the eldest son of Stephen died, which much facilitated its conclusion: the claims of his surviving son William seem to have opposed no obstacle.

F.—This treaty placed the kingdom in a very delicate situation, and in which it was next to impossible that jealousies and quarrels should not arise.

A.—From such perplexity it was fortunately relieved by the death of Stephen himself, in the following year. This prince wanted only a better title to the crown to have secured many benefits to England; from this circumstance alone no reign was ever more productive of misery. Stephen was graceful in person, strong and active; he is allowed to have been prompt in decision, bold in action: his friends applauded his generosity, his enemies admired his forbearance, and he won the hearts of all men by affability and condescension: his conduct as a husband and a father was unexceptionable, nor did he, notwithstanding the difficulties of his situation, indulge the exercise of cruelty and revenge.^b

P.—During these ages of turbulence we must not expect to find great refinement of manners, or that learning and the arts were in a very flourishing condition.

^a Gul. Neubrig. Brompton.

^b Gul. Malmesb. Mat. Paris.

F.—A very general misapprehension seems to exist, as to the state of manners with the early Anglo-Normans; because in battle they were clad in armour, our imagination hastily concludes that they were men of iron, fierce and occupied alone with thoughts of war; whereas, after their secure establishment in England, at no time did greater dissoluteness of conduct, or effeminacy in dress prevail. The Anglo-Normans wore flowing cloaks or gowns of silk, which swept the ground; their long curled hair, often ornamented by false additions, provoked the anathemas of the church, as well as their pointed shoes, whose peaks,^a stuffed with tow, curled upwards like a ram's horn, and were fastened by silver chains to the knee;^b Henry's principal minister and favourite, the Earl of Meulant, or Mellent, was not more distinguished by his political talents than by his excessive foppery. To the cause of learning in this island the Norman conquest was certainly beneficial; before the arrival of William the clergy, as we have seen at the accession of Alfred, contented themselves with the slightest smattering of letters, and could hardly stammer through the offices of the church: if any one understood grammar, he was a prodigy. The Anglo-Saxons were certainly a very rude, and I am afraid somewhat a dull people; in acuteness of intellect the Normans had much the advantage: although the erudition of that age tended as much to corrupt as to improve the understanding, yet the ecclesiastics infused a literary spirit into their own order, and the Latin tongue was with them generally cultivated; indeed the Latin of no age, till the revival of learning, is more terse and elegant than that of the twelfth century.

F.—Having praised the purity of the vehicle in

^a Eadmer.

^b Göl, Malmesb. lib. 3.

which science was conveyed, was the nature of the instruction worthy of equal commendation?

A.—During many ages, a system of instruction of great antiquity had prevailed throughout Europe, called the *trivium* and *quadrivium*:^a the first term included the sciences of grammar, rhetoric, and logic; the second of music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy: this arrangement was not always strictly adhered to, but the elements of these sciences were taught, imperfectly indeed, but as far as they were understood. Not content with this course, the Normans resorted to the Arabian schools in Spain, where they imbibed some improvement in physical science, and delighted themselves with the investigation of metaphysical subtilities, then highly in vogue: the utility of some of their inquiries, the following questions, taken from a MS quoted by Dr. Lingard,^b will evince: “Why cannot plants be produced over fire? Why is the nose made to hang over the face? Why are not horns generated on the human forehead? Whether the stars are animals; and if so, whether they have an appetite?”

F.—These absurdities seem introductory to the wrangling disputes of the schoolmen in the subsequent age.

A.—Conjecture supplying the place of inquiry, no improvement in the department of natural history could be expected: a curious document, however, of the state of medicine, remains in the *Regimen Sanitatis* of the School of Salernum, which became a sort of manual throughout Europe, and which, though not written in England, owes its origin to Robert, duke of Normandy, who, having been wounded in the crusade by a poisoned shaft, applied to the physicians of Salernum,

^a Joan. Sarisb. Metalog. lib. i. c. 12.

^b Hist. of Eng. Vol. I. *Questiones Naturales Perdifciles* Athelheardi.

at that time much celebrated, and being relieved by their skill, became desirous of some acquaintance with the healing art. To oblige him, John of Milan, in concurrence with the whole Salernian Academy, composed the work in question, consisting of nearly four hundred easy Leonine verses. The poem thus commences:

Anglorum regi scripsit schola tota Salerni;
 Si vis incolumem, si vis te reddere sanum
 Curas tolle graves, irasci crede prophanum;
 Parce mero, cœnato parum; non sit tibi vanum
 Surgere post epulas, somnum fuge meridianum;
 Hæc bene si serves, tu longe tempore vives.
 Salernum's school thus writes to England's king:
 Its rules well followed, health and safety bring;
 Shun busy cares, from impious wrath refrain;
 Sup lightly, think not spare potations vain;
 Rise after meals, indulge not noontide sleep.
 Long shalt thou live, if thou these precepts keep.

And so the author proceeds, in a very amusing strain of quackery, which he pursues through what Dr. Freind^a calls the six non-naturals in medicine; he is very copious on the virtues of herbs, amongst which sage and rue are his chief favourites: the first he calls, "salvatrix, conciliatrix, naturæ," and asks this astounding question:

Cur moriatur homo, cui salvia crescit in horto?
 Why should man die, so doth the sentence say,
 When sage grows in his garden day by day?

The work was early translated into English, and acquired general favour.

P.—As all books in this age were written in Latin, was that language commonly understood by other persons than those of the clerical order?

A.—To the large mass of the community the Latin tongue was then, as it is now, literally a dead language, and even the rich and powerful baron was rarely acquainted with any tongue except his own, the Gallo-Norman. The poets who wished to pay their court to

^a Hist. of Physic, part 2.

the great, wrote in that dialect: few of their productions of this date have seen the light, and from what we can gather, they seemed to consider excellence to consist in wire-drawing their subject to an interminable extremity. The common people still used the Anglo-Saxon tongue, little if at all adulterated.

P.—But the historians wrote in Latin.

A.—Undoubtedly, and they are both sufficiently numerous and respectable, but their appeal was made to posterity. As from their pages we have drawn the materials of our conversation, a short account of the chief of these writers may not be unacceptable. The first, in point of time, is Ingulf, Abbot of Croyland, in Lincolnshire, born in London 1030; he was secretary to William the Conqueror, in Normandy, and wrote a history of his Abbey, from its foundation in 664 to the year 1091: in this work he has introduced a variety of anecdotes relative to the general history of England. The next writer is Eadmer, an Englishman, a monk of Canterbury; his work is a history of the affairs of England in his own time, from 1066 to 1122, in which he has inserted many original papers, and preserved many important facts; the composition is much valued for its purity of style, good sense, learning, and candour.

P.—The example of these two native historians does not very well accord with the accusation of dullness with which you accused the English nation.

A.—The arrival of the Normans awoke the English from their intellectual torpor, by exciting their emulation. Another English instance is William of Malmesbury, born in Somersetshire, though it is said that he was only of half blood: he wrote a general history of England, in five books, from the arrival of the Saxons (449,) to the twenty-sixth year of Henry I. (1126), and a

modern history, which he calls *Novellæ*, in two books, from that year to the escape of the Empress Matilda from Oxford (1143): his works are highly esteemed; the Latin is purer in style than that of any of his cotemporaries; he united much diligence, good sense, and modesty, with a sincere regard to truth, though somewhat tinctured with the credulity and superstition of the times. This excellent person, one of the genuine fathers of English history, spent his life in the humble station of library-keeper in the Abbey of Malmesbury, where he died (1143). Posterity has certainly accorded to his memory more than he demanded: "I presume," says he, "not to expect the applause of my cotemporaries; but I hope that, when favour and malevolence are no more, I shall receive the character of an industrious though not of an eloquent historian." Simeon of Durham took great pains in collecting the memorials of our history, especially in the north, after they had been scattered by the Danes: his work is a History of the Kings of England, from 616 to the year 1130; but it is thought to be chiefly a transcript from the collections of Florence of Worcester, whose Chronicle of Chronicles reaches from the beginning of the world to the year 1118. But Florence is scarcely thought an original writer, his work being an epitome or transcript from the Chronicle or History of Europe, by Marianus Scotus.

P.—Still your authorities are the depreciated English.

A.—I will close the catalogue by one more example: Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, was the son of Nicholas, a married priest: in his youth he had a taste for poetry, but in later life he composed a general History of England, from the earliest accounts to the death of King Stephen, in 1154, in eight books: the earlier parts are compiled from Bede; the latter he acknowledges to

be a mere abridgment of various chronicles, and a relation of such particulars as he had heard and seen, and which are not without their value.

P.—But it is by English historians that the event of the Conquest, so triumphant to the Normans, is alone described.

A.—We are indebted for some particulars to Gulielmus Gemeticensis, a monk of the convent of Jumiègue. His History of the Normans, in eight books, is in its earlier parts abbreviated from the larger work on the same subject of the canon Dudo. This writer dedicated his history to William the Conqueror; at what year it ceases is uncertain, as it was continued by another monk to the accession of King Stephen. Gulielmus Pictaven-sis, or William of Poitiers, wrote the Acts of King William; his history reaches only to the year 1070; he had seen most of what he recounts, and is esteemed faithful, candid, and eloquent; his parallel of William with Julius Cæsar is very happily sustained. Ordericus Vitalis, a monk of St. Evreux, where he lived fifty-six years, wrote an ecclesiastical history in thirteen books, in which he intermixed many things relating to English history: he is esteemed too copious in his description of little matters, and too concise in affairs of moment, yet the whole is valuable: this writer was born indeed in England, but carried to Normandy when very young. Some scattered fragments of history are found in several minor monastic authors, both native and foreign; and notwithstanding the darkness of the eleventh century, there are few events in the English annals so copiously detailed by cotemporary and competent authorities, as the Norman Conquest and its immediate consequences.

DISSERTATION VI.

The Temple Church, London.

THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET.

HENRY II.	- - -	A.D.	1154
RICHARD I.	- - -	—	1189
JOHN	- - -	—	1199

SECTION I.

A.—FEW edifices in the metropolis are better worth a visit than the Temple Church, as it combines antiquity with beauty in a degree exceeded by nothing of similar dimensions in the kingdom.

P.—The exterior appearance of the church, probably from its confined situation, excites no particular attention: this doorway indeed, which is not readily observed, with its round arch ornamented, in admirable preservation, gives the perfect idea of a Norman structure immediately subsequent to the conquest.

A.—At once entering the western vestibule, we perceive that it is of a circular form: its elevated roof, supported by six clusters of pillars, each cluster consisting of four shafts, exhibits one of the earliest instances of deviation from the immense columns which we are accustomed to call Saxon.

F.—Two other round churches, the one at Cambridge and the other at Northampton, possess those huge pillars, and are consequently of somewhat an earlier period than the Temple Church.

A.—Between each cluster of pillars a pointed arch rises, a very early specimen of that form; and immediately above is an arcade of semicircular arches, so intersecting each other as if to show whence the idea of the pointed arch was derived. The lower part of the building is ornamented with an arcade, or range of pointed arches, the bases and capitals of which are in the ancient style: over each capital is a grotesque head, each varying in attitude and expression.

F.—Though the windows above are of the old Saxon semicircular construction, these varieties of style harmonize together extremely well; and as we must admit that the structure was completed at once, it is curious to observe how the pointed arch seems to be struggling to obtain a conquest over its more ancient rival.

A.—The general effect of the structure is eminently pleasing, and lighter than could have been expected from the period of its erection, which by a rare chance we are enabled precisely to ascertain, from an inscription on a tablet placed over the principal entrance, the original of which was destroyed by workmen, 1695. By it we are informed that Heraclius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, then in England, dedicated the church to the Virgin Mary, in the year 1185.

P.—Is it not generally understood that these round churches were modelled on the plan of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, built by Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine?

A.—And I believe the opinion is well founded: but

though we are not to conclude from this circumstance that all the ancient churches in England of a circular form were erected by the Knights Templars, yet the present structure was incontestably built by that fraternity, as they removed to this spot, from their former residence in Holborn, in the same year that the church was dedicated.

F.—In contemplating this beautiful fabric, we must not overlook the monumental effigies of nine worthies of that celebrated order, represented as cased in armour, in a resupine posture, and executed in marble with no contemptible skill; most of them *cross-legged*, thus indicating, by a sort of statuary pun, that if they were not of the fraternity of the Knights Templars, they had at least taken the vow as crusaders: but it remains in some uncertainty whose memory they were meant to perpetuate.

A.—One of the figures is generally thought to represent William Mareshall, earl of Pembroke,^a the excellent Protector in the reign of Henry the Third. But it is time to extend our view to the eastern part of the building, or chancel, of an oblong form, spacious, light, and lofty, consisting of three aisles of equal height: the roof is supported by eight quadruple clustered pillars, from the capitals of which diverge several groined ribs; the windows consist of three pointed lancet-shaped arches, the centre rising above the lateral ones, much resembling those of Salisbury Cathedral. The date of this part of the church is fortunately known also, its dedication having taken place in the year 1240. No building in England is better calculated than the Temple Church to point out the introduction of the pointed arch, and its gradual emancipation from the earlier Nor-

^a Weever. Dugdale.

man style, of which the perfect doorway is so fine a specimen. In taking leave of the latter, we may observe between the capitals of the pillars eight small half-length human figures, said to be effigies of Henry the Second, his Queen Eleanor, and the patriarch Heraclius.

F.—They afford us then a corroborative proof of the erection of the church during the reign of that monarch.

A.—We have already seen, in our last conversation, that the pretensions of Henry the Second to the English throne were derived from his mother, the Empress Matilda, daughter and heiress to Henry the First, his father being nothing more than the comparatively humble Geoffrey, count of Anjou.

F.—But it is absurd to call the introduction of this family of Anjou, or Plantagenet, to the throne, the ‘Saxon line restored,’ as it is given in the division of the English kings in the common almanacs. Though Henry the Second was descended from an Anglo-Saxon grandmother, the wife of Henry the First, yet this princess had several brothers, who left a numerous posterity.

A.—The young Count of Anjou, at the death of Stephen, was received by the English with universal satisfaction; and the first acts of his reign corresponded with those high expectations which had been formed of his rising talents: he demolished all the newly-erected castles,^a which had proved so many sanctuaries to rebels and freebooters; he dismissed the foreign mercenaries, with their leader, William d’Ypres, retained by King Stephen, whose disorders and licentiousness had excited the abhorrence of the nation;^b he revoked the improvi-

^a Hoveden.

^b G. Neubrig. M. Paris

dent grants which had been made, not only by that usurper, but those also which had been extorted from the necessities of Matilda.^a To conciliate still further the affections of his subjects, he confirmed the charter of liberties, which had been granted by his grandfather Henry the First:^b and thus order, justice, and security were established in a degree to which the nation had been long a stranger.

P.—Did Anjou, the hereditary dominions of Henry's family, give its possessor much power on the continent?

F.—Though Anjou could not rival in extent the greater fiefs of France, such as Normandy or Burgundy, yet, lying in the centre, and being one of the finest parts of that kingdom, its station was always respectable, especially after it was augmented by the conquest of Touraine: its counts for some generations held the office of grand seneschal of France. Fulk, whom we have seen take so active a part in opposition to Henry the First, had the folly in his latter days to resign the inheritance of Anjou for the sceptre of Jerusalem,^c having married the heiress of that kingdom; and his patrimonial possessions devolved to his eldest son Geoffrey, father of Henry the Second, who obtained the sobriquet of Plantagenet, which afterward passed into a surname, from his commonly wearing a stalk of broom, *planta genista*, in his bonnet; though the origin of this illustrious appellation, say others, is derived from Geoffrey's having applied some twigs of that plant to his person by way of penance. Henry the Second was never called Plantagenet, but Henry Fitz-Empress, or Henry Court Mantel, from the fashion of his cloak.

A.—The possessions of Henry in France were objects of the utmost alarm to the French king, since to

^a G. Neubrig. ^b Statutes of the Realm, vol. 1. ^c Gul. Malmesb. lib. 5.

Anjou and Touraine, his paternal inheritance, were united Normandy and Maine, which he derived, together with England, from his mother, Matilda, who had resigned the government in his favour; and to these were added the provinces of Poitou, Saintogne, Auvergne, Perigord, Limousin, Angoumois, and Guienne, of which he became sovereign in right of his wife Eleanor, heiress of the Duke of Guienne. Thus a third part of France, even in extent, and equal to a half in value, was united in his person, and the vassal became a more powerful prince than his suzerain, or sovereign lord.

P.—What part of these latter provinces constituted the dukedom of Aquitaine, the representative of which, as well as of Normandy, was accustomed to form a part of the pageantry in the coronation of the kings of England, till discontinued by George the Fourth?

A.—Guienne is merely a corruption of the word Aquitaine. The ancient Aquitani were a people of Old Gaul, who inhabited the banks of the Garonne; but their limits were never exactly defined: the dukedom seems to have consisted of the provinces of Guienne and Gascony. Eleanor, the heiress of these large possessions, was married to Louis the Seventh, king of France, in very early life: she continued his wife for sixteen years, and bore two daughters; but attending him in a crusade to Palestine against the infidels, she became the object of his jealousy by her supposed partiality towards a handsome Saracen. Louis, more delicate than politic, procured a divorce upon the ground of consanguinity,^a and restored those rich provinces which her marriage had annexed to the crown of France.

F.—There must have been an inauspicious disparity of age, as Henry could scarcely have attained his twen-

^a Gervas. Doroh.

tieth year, whilst the lady must at least have reached thirty.

A.—However desirable might be such a marriage in the eyes of ambition, its consequences were as might be expected: Eleanor had sufficient power to allure, but not to retain the affection of Henry; and the most irritating jealousy on her part, with continued neglect on his, embittered the latter years of their life with such vexations, as few, even royal couples, have exhibited an example.

P.—Henry could possess no great delicacy of feeling in espousing a repudiated wife, whose reputation must have received considerable injury.

A.—So thought King Louis; who said that the poorest gentleman in his kingdom would not desire Eleanor for his bride, her conduct having rendered her so infamous.^a But in this he was greatly mistaken, as many princes of the highest rank in France were anxious to possess the wealthy heiress; some even went so far as to form designs of seizing and marrying her by force. As soon as she arrived safe in Guienne, she sent to Henry, whom she had seen twice at the court of Louis, the offer of her hand: he repaired to her at Poitiers, and in six weeks after her divorce they were married.^b

P.—This marriage does not form an agreeable trait in Henry's character.

F.—Eleanor is more remembered than any of our ancient queens; for which she is indebted to numerous traditionary ballads, in which the fair Rosamond is represented as being compelled to choose her death by the hard alternative of the dagger or the poisoned bowl. Though such a catastrophe appears to be without the least foundation, it is not improbable that the solicitude

^a Suger Abb Vita Lod. Gros.

^b Gervas. Brompton.

of Henry to hide his intrigue, gave occasion to the tradition of his having constructed a labyrinth in his palace at Woodstock, to conceal his mistress: indeed the poet Drayton asserts that its ruins under ground were in his time remaining.^a Henry, by not observing, on his return from paying her a visit, a silken thread which had accidentally become attached to his shoe,^b unluckily revealed the intricacies of this retreat to the jealous scrutiny of Queen Eleanor. But this story has various versions.

A.—Rosamond was the daughter of Walter de Clifford,^c a baron of Herefordshire. At what period her unfortunate connexion with her royal lover originated is not ascertained; but her beauty has been celebrated by every succeeding age: she died 1177, and was buried in the convent of Godstow, near Oxford, with this quibbling epitaph, which an attempt to translate would be hopeless:

“ Hic jacet in tumba, Rosa mundi, non Rosa munda,
Non redolet, sed olet, quæ redolere solet.^d

The old chroniclers never allude to the tragical or violent death of Rosamond, further than by relating that the furious menaces of the queen produced such an effect upon her spirits, that she did not long survive. Her tomb being adorned with various pieces of sculpture, one of them a cup, probably an accidental ornament, might suggest the notion that she was poisoned.^e

F.—Henry bestowed large revenues upon the monastery of Godstow, on condition that lamps should be kept perpetually burning about the tomb of Rosamond; but under the reign of his successor, Hugh, the bishop of Lincoln, commanded them to be removed, as un-

^a Heroical Epistles.

^c Dugdale, Baronage, vol. 1.

^e Hearne in G. Neubrig.

^b Holinshed.

^d Brompton.

^f Hoveden.

worthy of so holy a place.^f But it may be a question whether mere piety and zeal against vice excited the prelate to this good act, or his desire to pay court to Queen Eleanor, who then governed the kingdom.

A.—But it ought to be observed, that Henry's early and continued disregard of sound morals disturbed not only the glory of his reign, but at one time absolutely endangered the existence of his throne; even though he never permitted in the objects of his affections any interference with his government, being, as a noble historian^a expresses it, "Though too frequently a lover, yet always a king."

F.—Rosamond had two sons: the elder, named Richard Longespee, from the sword he wore, was created Earl of Salisbury; the younger, Geoffrey, though of a martial turn, was early promoted to the bishopric of Lincoln. It was his custom in conversation to strengthen his assertions by making this appeal: "I protest by my faith and the king my father;" upon which the facetious royal chaplain, Walter de Mapes, used to observe, that it would be as well were he to remember sometimes his mother's honesty, as well as his father's royalty.^b

A.—The early years of Henry's reign were distinguished by much happiness and prosperity. An incursion of the Welsh was repelled by the king in person, after his standard-bearer, Henry de Essex, had basely taken flight;^c and he soon after increased his power on the continent, in a dispute with the Duke of Britany for the possession of the town of Nantz, lately occupied by Geoffrey, the king's brother, now deceased, which ended in its delivery to Henry. The duke, desirous of procuring the support of so great a monarch, contracted Constance, the heiress of his duchy, then an infant, to

^a Lord Lyttleton, Hist. of Henry II.

^b Joan. Saris. de Nugis Curial.

^c G. Neubrig.

Geoffrey, third son of Henry, of the like tender age;^a and dying a few years after, this important province was yielded to the king as *mesne* lord and natural guardian, and for the present annexed to his other extensive dominions (1158). A disputed claim with the French king to the county of Toulouse is worth mentioning, merely on account of its introducing a scutage, instead of the personal service of the military tenants of the crown, the first to be met with in English history.^b

F.—It was during this quarrel that the French and English monarchs met the Pope at the castle of Torci, on the Loire; and they gave him such marks of respect, that both dismounted to receive him, and holding each of them one of the reins of his bridle, walked on foot by his side;^c a spectacle, cries an ecclesiastical writer^d in an ecstasy, to God, angels, and men, and such as had never before been exhibited to the world (1161).

P.—And which we may safely imagine never will again.

F.—Yet not long before, the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, at the ceremony of his first reception at Rome, held the stirrup of Pope Adrian the Fourth much against his inclination:^e it is said, that being on the wrong side of the horse, and admonished by the Pontiff of that error, he made answer that his ignorance must be excused, as he had never before done the office of a groom. It has even been reported, that when Frederic was kneeling to receive absolution, that the Pope placed his foot on the emperor's neck.

A.—Henry, disgusted perhaps by such examples of papal haughtiness, as well as by the unlimited power exercised by the ecclesiastics in his dominions, at

^a G. Neubrig.

^b Gervas. Madox.

^c Trivet.

^d Baronius.

^e Otto Frising, lib. 2, c. 21.

this time meditated a scheme of reducing his clergy to a state of obedience to the civil power, from which they were at that time exempt; an enterprise justified by sound policy, yet by an unfortunate mistake in the choice of his instrument, it involved the king in much disquietude and danger, without effecting the purpose which he had so much at heart.

F.—Henry's quarrel with Thomas à Becket is the most remarkable domestic transaction in the earlier periods of English history.

A.—This celebrated person, the first man of English descent who since the Norman conquest had risen to any considerable preferment, was the son of Gilbert Becket, a citizen of London; who travelling into the Holy Land as a pilgrim, was taken prisoner, and became the slave of a Mahometan chief. In his captivity he had the fortune to acquire the affections of his master's daughter, who aided him to escape; but the lady, unable to endure the absence of her lover, speedily followed him. The only English words with which she was acquainted were London and Gilbert; and arriving in the metropolis, she ran from street to street, repeating "Gilbert, Gilbert," to a deriding crowd. But true love, ever faithful to his votaries, at length directed her steps to Becket's house: he received her with the utmost affection; and having married her, by the advice of six bishops assembled at St. Paul's, she assumed the Christian faith, and was baptized by the name of Matilda.

P.—This is a pretty little romance; how much of it may be true?

A.—It is but a mere epitome of a long detail in the genuine monkish style of the old chronicles, and it must be owned to carry somewhat of a suspicious ap-

^a Brompton, 1054.

pearance. Thomas à Becket, the son of this interesting couple, seems to have been early intended for the church, as he was first educated at Merton Abbey, and continued his studies at the universities of Oxford and Paris. Having been introduced to the notice of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, he was promoted to the archdeaconry of that diocese, and recommended to the king as worthy of further trust and preferment.^a Becket so well improved his opportunities, that he speedily became the most favoured minister and intimate companion of the monarch: advanced to the dignity of chancellor, employments and trusts of all kinds were heaped upon him without measure and without propriety: he held a scandalous number of ecclesiastical benefices; he had royal castles and forts committed to his custody, and various escheats of great baronies that had devolved to the crown. These revenues he expended without account or control: his way of life was splendid; his amusements gay; and the king frequently condescended to partake of his entertainments.^b

P.—But how was such favouritism consistent with the acknowledged good sense of Henry?

A.—The fascination of Becket's manners, combined with singular dexterity, seems somewhat to have hoodwinked the usual discernment of the king. After transacting the most important business, they would play together, says a cotemporary, like boys of the same age.^c Once as the king and the chancellor were riding in the streets of London, they observed a beggar who was shivering with cold: "Would it not be very praiseworthy," said the king, "to give that poor man a warm coat in this severe season?" "It would, surely," replied

^a Fitz-Steph.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

the chancellor; "and you do well, Sir, in thinking of such good actions." "Then he shall have one presently," cried Henry; and seizing the skirt of Becket's coat, which was scarlet and lined with ermine, began to pull it violently. After a struggle, in which both had nearly tumbled from their horses, the king bestowed the coat upon the beggar, who was not a little astonished at the present.^a

P.—But these social accomplishments, we may suppose, were not exactly calculated to exalt Becket to the primacy.

A.—From the pliancy of Becket's manners, Henry might conclude that his minister would assist in the favourite project of retrenching the ecclesiastical privileges, as he had always been acquainted with his master's intentions in that particular; yet perhaps a nice observer might have discovered, in the inordinate pomp which the chancellor was fond of displaying, a principle of pride which would, in upholding an undivided and unborrowed power, be well adapted to resist the inclinations of his sovereign.

F.—The description of Becket's magnificence surprises us by its extreme ostentation: in this part of his conduct we are reminded of Cardinal Wolsey in a later age. Becket, travelling in France on a mission to the French king, was attended by a vast retinue: whenever he entered a town, the procession was led by two hundred and fifty boys, singing national airs; then came his hounds in couples, succeeded by eight waggons, covered with skins, and protected by guards: these contained the ornaments of his chapel, plate, and various furniture; then followed twelve sumpter horses, on each of which rode a monkey, with the groom be-

^a Fitz-Steph.

hind on his knees; next came numerous esquires, bearing the shields and leading the chargers of their knights; then the falconers and officers of the household, with knights and clergymen, riding two and two; and last the ambassador, conversing with a few friends: the people exclaiming, "What must the King of England be, when his chancellor travels in such state?"^a

F.—The elevation of Becket to the primacy was contrary to the advice of many of the ministers, and of Matilda, the king's mother;^b indeed its impropriety was so obvious as to induce a prelate to observe, that the king had worked a miracle, by changing a layman (Becket having only taken deacon's orders) and a soldier into an archbishop.^c

A.—No sooner was the primate installed in his high dignity, than he at once dropped the mask, and astonished the king by the suddenness and completeness of the alteration. Though Becket retained in his retinue and attendance much of his ancient pomp, so well calculated to strike the vulgar, yet in his own person he exhibited the most ostentatious humility: he wore sackcloth next his skin, and changed it so seldom that it became filled with vermin; his usual diet was bread and water, made unsavoury with bitter herbs; and he was perpetually engaged in some office of devotion.^d The first fruits of this change was the resignation of the chancellorship, which he sent to Henry in Normandy, without previously apprizing the king of his intention, who now began to open his eyes with wonder at the mistake which he had committed.

F.—It is true that Becket said to the king, "If you appoint me to the primacy, we shall not agree;"^e but

^a Fitz-Steph.

^c Fitz-Steph.

^b Epist. St. Thom.

^e Ibid.

^d Ibid.

Henry understood the threat as pure raillery, and was not less susceptible to the shame of having been so completely duped.

A.—However, nothing daunted in his purpose, the king resolved to begin that reformation in the church which its abuses so imperiously demanded. It was asserted that, since the king's accession, no less than a hundred murders had been committed by clergymen,^a who by the privileges of their order could not be punished by the civil power. An atrocious case had justly excited the popular indignation: a clerk in Worcestershire having seduced a gentleman's daughter, and afterwards murdered the father, Henry required that the delinquent should be tried in the king's court;^b Becket insisted on the privileges of the church, and protected the criminal, confining him in the bishop's prison, lest he should be seized by the king's officers; and maintained that no greater punishment could be inflicted than degradation; and when it was demanded that, after the priest had been degraded, he should be delivered up to the civil power, the primate refused, on the ground that it would be iniquitous to try a man twice upon the same accusation.

F.—Well might a cotemporary monastic writer exclaim, that the bishops were more intent in maintaining the liberties of the clergy than in correcting their vices.^c

A.—The conduct of Becket on this occasion has been viewed in different lights by the partisans of the Romish church and by Protestants; what was the determining motive which induced Becket to become the inflexible champion of the privileges of the clergy, does not very clearly appear. The ordinary ends of ambition

^a G. Neubrig.

^b Fitz-Steph.

^c G. Neubrig. lib. 2.

would have been more readily obtained by Becket's compliance with the king's inclinations, as the union of the primacy with the chancellorship must have bestowed a power in that age utterly uncontrollable. About a year after his elevation to the primacy, Becket attended a general council, held at Tours by Pope Alexander the Third, at which he was treated with the most marked respect;^a and as the immediate predecessor of the reigning Pope was Nicholas Breakspear, who assumed the name of Adrian the Fourth, the only Englishman who ever filled the pontifical chair, it is not improbable that Becket might consider the papacy itself, by some fortunate contingency, as within his reach.

F.—To account for the sudden transformation of a gay and luxurious courtier into an austere and solemn monk, a modern French writer^b attributes to Becket the desire of becoming the protector of the still despised natives of the Anglo-Saxon race; but this imitation of Moses in the court of Pharaoh is not borne out by any feasible reasoning, no expression of tenderness or regard towards his oppressed countrymen ever escaping from the lips of the blessed Thomas himself.

A.—Henry resolving to embrace the opportunity which the enormous crime that had occurred in Worcester-shire now afforded, summoned an assembly of the prelates at Westminster, and put to them this plain and decisive question: "Are you willing to submit to the ancient laws and customs of the kingdom?" They unanimously replied, "We are willing, save the privileges of our order and the honour of God."^c This artifice, as may be supposed, served only to provoke the indigna-

^a Joan. Sarisb. in *Anglia Sacra*.

^b M. Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre*.

^c Fitz-Steph. *Hoveden*.

tion of the monarch, who left the assembly with visible marks of displeasure.

F.—But surely in apology for the bishops it may be said, that there was no impropriety in resisting an innovation. If the king applied for their consent, it was an acknowledgment that they had a right to withhold it; nor did it come with a very good grace that the clergy alone should be requested to go back to the Anglo-Saxon customs, and resign those immunities which they had acquired under the Norman kings, when the monarch and the nobility retained the vast accession of power which they had accumulated in the same period.

A.—Becket being pressed to alter his reply, said, if an angel from heaven should advise him to make the acknowledgment without the saving clause, he would anathematize him.^a But here the primate exhibited a weakness which has utterly tarnished the consistency of his conduct; for strange to say, the Pope's legate in England, unwilling to hazard the friendship of Henry at an important juncture of his master's affairs, prevailed with Becket to give an unconditional assent, and to promise that he would obey "the customs of the kingdom," without exception or reserve.^b

P.—Such an unaccountable concession appears a complete triumph to the king.

A.—The monarch, not content with a verbal promise, which he conjectured the prelates would take the first opportunity to retract, summoned a great national council at Clarendon, near Salisbury (1164,) which passed a body of laws, called the Constitutions of Clarendon:^c the two chief of which were, that no appeal should be made to the Pope without the king's permis-

^a Fitz-Steph.

^b Hoveden. Gervas.

^c Fitz-Steph.

sion; and that the clergy should be amenable to the civil courts. To these laws he compelled the prelates again to promise obedience. Becket for a long time obstinately withheld his assent; but finding himself deserted even by his brethren, overcome by the solicitations of some powerful friends, and perhaps alarmed at the sight of armed men ^a stationed in an apartment with swords drawn and their garments tucked up, as if prepared for some desperate action, he reluctantly complied, and again took the oath "legally, with good faith, and without fraud or reserve,"^b to observe the Constitutions. But he still declined to set his seal and signature; a miserable evasion, but an eminent example of that mental reservation so pertinaciously patronized by the church of Rome.

F.—Thus far the king appears to have performed the duties of a wise, powerful, and enlightened monarch; indeed his principles were somewhat too far advanced for the spirit of the age, as after all they were not seconded by the general voice of the community: the opposition of the clergy was natural, and must be received with those grains of allowance for the *esprit du corps* which has ever existed in all ancient and powerful establishments.

A.—Becket retired to his diocese, dispirited and mortified; he soon pretended the deepest contrition and repentance for the part which he had taken, and refused to exercise his clerical functions till he had received absolution from the Pope,^c who, instigated by his intrigues, declined to ratify the obnoxious Constitutions of Clarendon, and thus rendered the whole plan of Henry abortive.

P.—That must surely be an accommodating sys-

^a Gervas.

^b Fitz-Steph.

^c Epist. St. Thom.

tem of religion, which can dissolve obligations when they begin to be felt inconvenient.

A.—Becket attempted to flee the kingdom, but the vessel was twice put back by contrary winds. Being summoned to an interview at Woodstock, the king coolly asked if he had left England because it was too small to contain them both?^a But the temper of Henry, ever subject to violent starts of passion, at length got the better of his judgment. In a council held a short time after at Northampton, Becket was summoned to appear on a pretended contempt of the Court of Exchequer, for which he was amerced in a heavy fine; several other large sums were demanded upon equally frivolous pretences; and to complete the climax, a sudden claim was made for arrears of account whilst he acted as chancellor, to the amount of forty-four thousand marks,^b a sum equivalent to a million of pounds at the present day. But Henry much mistook his ground; the spirit of Becket being too lofty to sink beneath such oppression. After deliberating a few days, the archbishop at length ordered mass to be celebrated at the altar of St. Stephen, directing it to begin as at the festival of that proto-martyr, "Princes sat and spake against me."^c He thence went to court, arrayed in his sacred vestments, and taking the cross in his own hands, bore it aloft as his protection, and marched into the royal apartments.^d The king, astonished at this parade, which seemed to threaten him with excommunication, retired into an inner chamber, but sent some prelates to remonstrate with the primate upon his audacious behaviour. Becket reproved their presumption, and strictly inhibited them, who were his suffragans, from assisting at

^a Hist. Quadrapartita.

^b Fitz-Steph. Epist. St. Thom.

^c Hoveden. Pars. Post.

^d Hoveden.

any trial which the king might institute against him, as he appealed to the supreme pontiff against such iniquitous judges; but thinking himself no longer safe at Northampton, he withdrew privately by night in the habit of a monk,^a and after various dangers reached the continent in safety.

F.—Such boldness and inflexibility were calculated to ensure popular favour, and induce men, against their better judgment, to overlook his ingratitude towards the king, his violation of his oath and engagements, as well as the unreasonableness of the ecclesiastical privileges, of which he affected to be the champion.

A.—The king immediately sent embassies to the King of France and to the Pope; but Becket had forestalled his purpose in both instances: Louis, besides being excessively superstitious, was well pleased to give disturbance to Henry's government; he had even honoured Becket with a visit at Soissons.^b When Henry's ambassadors, in mentioning to him the ground of their master's complaint, called Becket 'the late archbishop,' the French monarch suddenly stopt them, saying, "I am a king as well as the King of England, but I am neither willing nor able to degrade even the lowest clerk in my dominions."^c At a conference with the Pope, who gave, as might be expected, but a cold reception to a magnificent embassy, one of the English bishops blundered in his set Latin speech, substituting two or three times the word *oportuebat* for *oportebat*;^d which causing much ridicule, the interview was productive of no advantage.

F.—Becket himself took a surer method of obtaining the pope's favour, by repairing in person to Rome, and

^a Fitz-Steph.

^b Hist. Quadra.

^c Gervas.

^d Hist. Quadra.

resigning his see into the hands of the supreme pontiff, who invested him anew with the dignity.^a

A.—In the bitterness of the quarrel, Henry committed an act of great injustice: he banished all the relatives, friends, and dependants of the primate, to the number of four hundred persons, without distinction of age or sex, and confiscated their estates;^b he even compelled them to make oath, before their departure, that they would instantly join their patron: idly expecting that Becket would thus be reduced to necessity in relieving them. But the archbishop, now supported by the funds of the French monarch, and roused, not overwhelmed, by this new hardship, issued a censure, excommunicating the king's chief ministers by name, and suspended the spiritual thunder of an interdiction over Henry himself, that he might avoid the blow by a timely repentance.^c

P.—And did this great monarch stand in awe of such a species of vengeance?

A.—Becket found his threats of sufficient strength, not only to protect himself, but to reduce Henry to the necessity of appealing to the Pope; which act was virtually a repeal of his own constitutions, and consequently a complete triumph to Becket's cause. The king too began to perceive that no final advantage would accrue by continuing the contest: several treaties of reconciliation were broken off by the mutual suspicion and insincerity of the parties; Henry insisting upon a salvo to his royal dignity, and Becket upon a salvo to the honour of God, clauses that were perfectly understood; and then, when all difficulties were removed, the king refused to grant the kiss of peace,^d a ceremony usual at

^a Hist. Quadra.

^c Fitz-Steph. M. Paris.

^b Gervas.

^d Fitz-Steph.

that period, as a pledge of forgiveness. At length (1170) Becket was presented to the king at Fretville, in Normandy: the meeting was attended with much hypocrisy on both sides; the prelate would have thrown himself upon his knees in the dirt, which the king prevented, and in return condescended to hold the stirrup whilst Becket remounted his horse.^a

P.—The terror of an interdiction must have been great indeed, which could induce so haughty a prince thus to humiliate himself.

F.—The haughtiness of Henry was more than matched by the inflexible pride of Becket. Previous to this reconciliation, in a conference between the kings of France and England, Henry said, “ Let Becket act towards me with the same submission which the greatest of his predecessors have paid to the least of mine, and there shall be no controversy between us.”^b Even the Pope recommended, in an epistle to Becket, that, “ Saving the honour of his office and the liberty of the church, he should humble himself to Henry, and strive to recover his affection.”^c But humility was a lesson that the primate would never learn.

A.—The conditions of Becket’s restoration were in themselves a victory, as it was agreed that “ obedience to the ancient customs,” the old ground of controversy, should be buried in oblivion. During the negotiation, Henry, justly alarmed at the consequence of the threatened interdiction, thought that, by associating his eldest son, Prince Henry, in his government, he should at least secure the throne to his family; and for this purpose he had the youth crowned at Westminster by the archbishop of York.^d Becket having obtained intelligence of this intention of the king, broke out in expres-

^a Gervas.^b Ibid.^c Epist. St. Thom. lib. 2.^d Hist. Quadrap.

sions of the utmost violence, pretending that himself, as archbishop of Canterbury, had alone the right to officiate; which was altogether a groundless pretence, as even the Conqueror was crowned by an archbishop of York: and when he discovered that the Pope had privately absolved the ministers of Henry from their sentence of excommunication, his arrogance and rage become truly ludicrous, and exhibit no very inviting portrait of a catholic martyr. In a letter on this occasion he writes: "Satan is let loose to the destruction of the church; Barabbas is freed and Christ is crucified a second time; such impenitent sinners even St. Peter himself had not the power to absolve." But he adds, in a comfortable strain of self-satisfaction, "As for me, I commit to God his own cause."^a

F.—It has been suggested that, from these hypocritical or self-deluding expressions, Becket meditated a project of obtaining an ascendancy over the mind of the prince; as, had he officiated, it would have been easy to insinuate that the youthful monarch was indebted to the primate for his crown.

A.—On Becket's arrival in England he was coldly received by the nobility, but with much applause by the populace.^b He now proceeded to exercise a most unjustifiable act of vindictiveness, which shows his genuine character. Near Canterbury, messengers came to him from the archbishop of York and the bishops of London and Salisbury, who were proceeding to the king in Normandy; to whom he notified a sentence of suspension against the archbishop, and a bull of excommunication against the two latter prelates, which he had procured from Rome against them for the part which they had taken in Prince Henry's coronation. This act

^a Epist. St. Thom. lib. 5.

^b Hoveden.

excited general indignation: the sheriff of Kent asked whether he meant by this bold step to bring fire and sword into the kingdom?^a

P.—The honour of God or of the church could surely form no ground for these proceedings.

F.—Becket might judge otherwise; for though the king had consented to annul the Constitutions of Clarendon, he still persisted to carry their spirit into various acts of his administration; and the primate might apprehend that the immunities of the clergy would at length fall a sacrifice. By this bold stroke Henry would see that he must look for no relaxation in Becket's opposition, the archbishop's intrepidity defying all danger; as after six years' exile his spirit was so unsubdued, that he told the King of France at his departure, he was going into England to play for his head.^b

A.—Becket, desirous of paying a visit to the young prince at Woodstock, was prevented by a message from proceeding further than the metropolis, where he made a sort of triumphal entry, amidst the acclamations of all ranks of its inhabitants. Returning to his diocese, he employed himself in excommunicating many of his ancient enemies, amongst others Ranulf de Broc and Roger his brother: the latter for no other cause than that he had cut off the tail of one of the prelate's sumpter horses.^c

P.—However trivial or ridiculous such an incident may appear, it would be felt by such a man as Becket as an unpardonable affront.

A.—The suspended and excommunicated prelates having reached Normandy, threw themselves at the king's feet, beseeching him to relieve them from the humiliating situation in which they were placed by Becket.^d

^a Fitz-Steph.

^b Ibid.

^c Hist. Quadrap.

^d Fitz-Steph.

Henry foresaw the immediate revival of that contest between the crown and the mitre, which he fondly hoped his concessions had appeased; and greatly agitated, he asked them, "What would you have me do?" "It is not for us," replied the archbishop of York, "to say what should be done; but whilst Becket lives, neither you nor your kingdom will ever be at peace." Thus artfully instigated, Henry broke out into a paroxysm of fury, exclaiming, "Shall this fellow, who came to court on a lame horse, with all his estate in a wallet behind him, trample upon the king, the royal family, and the whole kingdom? Will none of all those lazy, cowardly knights whom I maintain deliver me from this turbulent priest?"^a

F.—Such exclamations might be well termed something more than indiscreet.

A.—They led indeed to a fatal result: four knights of Henry's household, Reginald Fitz-Urse, William de Traci, Hugh de Moreville, and Richard Brito, taking these passionate expressions to be a hint for Becket's death, secretly withdrew from court, and, as a monkish writer relates, 'conducted by the devil,'^b arrived by different roads at the castle of Ranulf de Broc, six miles from Canterbury, December 28, 1170. The next morning, accompanied by twelve men at arms, they repaired to the abbey, and were admitted into an apartment, in which they found the archbishop conversing with some of his clergy. Fitz-Urse informed him that they were sent by the king to command him to absolve the prelates: a violent altercation ensuing, they gave hints that his life would be in danger if he did not comply. At the departure of the knights, they charged his servants not to allow him to flee; on which Becket

^a Hist. Quadra.

^b Fitz-Steph.

cried out with great vehemence, "I will never flee from any man living; and I defy the rage of impious assassins."^a

P.—Thus warned, it is singular that some measures of security were not resorted to.

A.—The friends of the primate blamed the roughness of his answers, and pressed him to escape; but he replied, that he wanted no advice, knowing well how to act. Intelligence being brought that the knights were arming, "What matters it," he exclaimed, "let them arm:"^b but some of his servants, greatly alarmed, hurried him into the church, where the evening service was performing, as a place of greater security. The knights now approached, and finding the gates of the Abbey closed, would have used force, but de Broc showed them a passage through a window by which they got in. Not finding the archbishop, they followed him to the cathedral; the monks seeing their approach, would have locked the doors, but Becket forbade them, desiring them not to make a castle of a church.^c The four knights finding no resistance, rushed into the choir, and brandishing their weapons, called out, "Where is Thomas à Becket? where is the traitor?" At which receiving no answer, they continued, "Where is the archbishop?" At this Becket boldly advanced, and said, "Here I am, an archbishop, but no traitor."^d The conspirators again commanded him to absolve the excommunicated prelates: he replied, that no satisfaction had been made, nor would he comply. "Thou shalt die then according to thy desert," exclaimed the infuriated knights, and seizing him, they endeavoured to drag him from the church, but Becket clinging to a pillar, they were unable to force him out: during the

^a Gervas. Fitz-Steph.

^b Hist. Quadra.

^c Fitz Steph.

^d Ibid.

struggle he shook Traci so roughly as almost to throw him down; and as Fitz-Urse approached, the archbishop thrust him violently away, calling him a pimp;^a at which opprobrious expression the enraged assassin lifted his sword, and a monk interposing, had his arm nearly severed from his body. Becket, who had bowed his neck and joined his hands together in a posture of prayer, was wounded on the head, and by three other blows given by the conspirators, his skull was almost cloven in two, and his brains scattered about the pavement of the church.^b

P.—It is natural in remarkable transactions to look for parallel cases; but I recollect nothing in history which reminds us of this appalling catastrophe, an archbishop of acknowledged sanctity, slain before the altar which he had made the greatest sacrifices to defend.

F.—Becket is said to have been of tall stature, and to have possessed a graceful carriage, with a mild and handsome countenance; his nose was prominent, a little inflexed. It is admitted, that he was unstained with the vices of the court, even during his career of gaiety as the companion of Henry.^c

A.—The motives of Becket's conduct it appears difficult to appreciate; he might at first assume the character of a zealot, merely from principles of ambition, but becoming inflamed in the contest, he probably worked himself up into a real enthusiasm: he was, doubtless, a man of consummate cunning, undaunted courage, and invincible constancy. Who could not wish him a better cause?

F.—Yet both the man and his cause have found defenders even at the present day, in modern catholic writers,^d who overlook in their vindication the singular

^a Hist. Quadra.^b Fitz-Steph.^c Ibid.^d Berington. Lingard.

ingratitude, the unrelenting vengeance, and overweening pride of Thomas à Becket.

A.—Henry was fully aware of the abhorrence which Becket's assassination was calculated to excite; and justly alarmed at the situation to which his culpable and passionate expressions had exposed him, he shut himself from the light of the sun,^a and pretended, for it could but be pretence, to refuse all sustenance for three days;^b but in that interval he well matured his plans, and speedily despatched an embassy to the Pope, to whom he protested his innocence of the murder, and professed his willingness to submit entirely to the judgment of his holiness;^c by applying also certain arguments, the force of which was well understood at Rome, he suspended the dreaded interdiction and anathema, which a weak prince would most certainly have incurred.

F.—But the clergy at home were not backward in magnifying the merits of their martyr: endless were the panegyrics on his virtues, and innumerable miracles were wrought over his reliques. An account of them in two volumes^d was at one time preserved at Christ Church in Canterbury; every disease was cured, lost eyes and limbs were restored to those who had been deprived of them;^e not only dead men were raised to life, but horses, dogs, and cows.^f These wonders began very early; the saint being exposed to view before he was buried, rose up out of his coffin, and lighted the wax candles; and after the funeral ceremony was over, he held up his hand to bless the people:^g two years after his death he was canonized by his ancient friend Pope Alexander the third; his body was removed to a magnificent shrine, pilgrims of every rank arrived at

^a Gervas.

^b Hist. Quadra.

^c Hoveden.

^d Gervas.

^e Ibid.

^f M. Paris.

^g Hoveden.

Canterbury, from all parts of Europe. The altars of the Virgin and of Christ became deserted, and the well-worn steps of Becket's tomb attest to this day the innumerable devotees who offered their oblations.

P.—I recollect to have read that in one year they exceeded in number one hundred thousand,^a and this vast resort long continued. In the Prologue to Chaucer's Tales, written two centuries after the event, the old bard thus relates of the pilgrims :

And specially from every shire's ende
Of Engelande to Canterbury they wende.

A.—The monks would have it be believed that the four knightly assassins speedily perished by untimely deaths, but the fact was different; as they were exposed only to ecclesiastical censures^b they were never called to account by Henry; yet, finding themselves universally shunned as excommunicated persons, they repaired to Rome,^c and submitting to certain penances, were absolved, but were enjoined a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where it is probable three of them died; the remaining knight became the stock of an old English family, long settled in Gloucestershire, of whom it was said, by way of punishment for this crime of their ancestor, that

“ The Tracies have always the wind in their faces.”

“ No very severe judgment, remarks the quaint Fuller, and might spare the females the use of a fan upon a summer's day.”

F.—This truly protestant writer is somewhat angry with the papists for raising such a scandal against so respectable a family; but it might originate from the purpose of Sir William Tracy to perform his penitential

^a Somner, *Antiq. of Cant.*

^b Pet. Blesens. *Epis.* 75.

^c G. Neubrig.

pilgrimage being ever frustrated by contrary winds: he was buried, it is conjectured, at Mort in Devon, 1180.^d

A.—The moral guilt of Henry in the transaction of Becket's murder must ever remain somewhat questionable; he extricated himself indeed from his perilous situation with admirable address, and found leisure and opportunity to undertake an expedition against Ireland, a design which he had long projected, and which much retrieved his reputation.

^a Fuller's Worthies, Gloucester.

DISSERTATION VI.

SECTION II.

HENRY II. - - - 1172 to 1189.

P.—DURING the progress of so many centuries, no mention has yet occurred of Ireland in connection with the authentic affairs of England.

A.—As the petty princes amongst whom that kingdom was divided, had always confined their depredations to the territories of each other, no pretence of interference in its concerns had arisen to its powerful neighbour: but Henry had notwithstanding long cast an ambitious eye on this fertile country, and for the purpose of sanctioning his project of subduing it, he applied to Pope Adrian IV. so early as the year 1156,^a who well satisfied at such an appeal, as a virtual acknowledgment that all Christian islands belonged to the patrimony of St. Peter,^b granted him a bull, exhorting him to invade Ireland, that he might extirpate the vice of its inhabitants, and oblige them to pay to Rome the tribute of Peter's pence.^c

F.—This generosity of the Holy See was much upon a par with that bounty which some ages after conferred the new world upon the Spaniards. It is surely both strange and curious, that Adrian, who but a few years before was absolutely a wandering mendicant, the son of Robert Chambers, an obscure clerk at St. Alban's,^d and who had been discharged from that monastery for his want of application, should, by the

^a Girald. Camb.^b M. Paris.^c Rymer, vol. i.^d M. Paris, Vit. Abb.

caprice of fortune, arrive at the power of bestowing, by his own authority, a new kingdom, on a prince who possessed no other conceivable claim to its dominion, than the power of the sword.

A.—The Irish, from the beginning of time, had been buried in the most profound barbarism: as the island had never been invaded by the Romans, civilization had but faintly dawned upon its inhabitants, whose state of cultivation may be appreciated from their ignorance of the simple art of tillage; and the small principalities into which the country was divided, being perpetually exposed to hostility and rapine, both from without and from within, effectually precluded the hope of improvement, as the usual title of each petty prince was the murder of his predecessor.

P.—But how does this account agree with the high pretensions of Irish antiquaries, to a state of superior refinement in ages very far remote?

A.—The disagreement arises from the one statement being founded on truth, the other on fiction.

P.—In attempting to become acquainted with the supposed antiquities of Ireland, I have never been sufficiently fortunate to meet with an intelligible guide. Who and what are the Milesians with whose exploits Irish imaginations are so much inflated?

A.—It will require some patience to get at their origin, as the absurdity of the defenders of Irish antiquity exceeds all legitimate bounds: amongst several authorities for the fabulous history of Ireland, one of the most copious is Geoffrey Keating, a catholic clergyman, born in Munster, who wrote a "General History of Ireland," about the year 1625, in the Irish tongue, and which was first translated and published a century after, by one Mr. Dermod O'Connor: the later works

of O'Flaherty,^a Vallancy, and other Irish historians, being chiefly transcripts from this writer, we will confine ourselves to his narration. Keating's book is a thick folio, and professes to be compiled from exceedingly ancient MSS. both in prose and verse: the composition is delightfully Irish, and truly worthy of the subject. To give a regular account, says Keating, of the first inhabitants of Ireland, it is necessary to begin at the creation of the world; for let it not be thought that it is impossible to trace a genealogy to Adam, since the ancient Irish retained a learned body of soothsayers, whose peculiar office it was to attend to the pedigree of their princes: and to take off the wonder of the thing, as the Doctor says, by showing that it can be done, he with inimitable simplicity gives an example from a Welsh MS., which derives a certain British king by the proper degrees from our first parents. But Keating candidly admits that he will not vouch as authentic any thing which occurred before the flood; he absolutely treats as fictitious an old tradition that a certain leader, Fiontan, with his wife Cæsara, the niece of the patriarch Noah, survived the deluge by their great skill in swimming, and established themselves in Ireland; the first settler, according to this author, being Partholanus, the seventh in descent from Japhet, in the line of Magog, who arrived from Mygdonia in Greece about three hundred years after the flood: his posterity colonized Ireland for the space of three hundred years, when they were unfortunately extirpated by a most destructive plague, which left not a man to record the melancholy tale.

P.—How then, it may be asked, was the catastrophe made known?

A.—After the destruction of this unfortunate race,

^a Ogygia.

Ireland lay waste for thirty years; and about this time the greater number of the Irish lakes were formed. Soon after another Grecian captain, Nemedius, descended also from Magog, arrived with his companions; but their possession was transient, as they were speedily attacked and expelled by an African colony. Returning to Greece, they were so ill treated by their countrymen, as to be compelled, amongst other hardships, to carry earth in leathern bags to the tops of the highest and most barren mountains, in order to form a soil: from this circumstance they received the name of Fir-bolgs.

F.—Fir, we conclude, signifying a man, and bolg a bag. It is said that three families, yet remaining in Ireland, are of Fir-bolg extraction. Some indeed interpret Fir-bolg by *Viri Belgæ*; but what could the Belgians at this period have to do with Ireland?

A.—The Fir-bolgs, exasperated by this unkind treatment of their brethren, again took courage, and renewed an attempt upon Ireland, which they reconquered, and divided into five provinces, as at present; Munster being separated into two, the north part called Thomond, the southern Desmond. The government of the Fir-bolgs continued a few centuries, when they were once more expelled by a new enemy, the Tuatha de Danans, or the sons of the Princess Danans: these also were Grecks, and they were particularly celebrated for their skill in necromancy: they ruled the kingdom for the space of one hundred and ninety-seven years.

P.—To what period of the world do these events conduct us?

A.—About one thousand years from the deluge. These Tuatha de Danans were conquered by a new race, the Milesian, which had not hitherto appeared in Ireland. To understand the history of this ancient stock,

we must turn to a distant country. In Scythia, Feniusa Farsa, the grandson of Magog, was a mighty monarch; he left his kingdom to his posterity, but his second son, Niul, having no portion from his father, was sent, in the words of my author, to travel into foreign parts for the benefit of the public schools, and that he might improve himself in the *seventy-two* learned languages; he was told never to forget that he was a Scythian. With these advantages he at length settled in Egypt, where he married the Princess Scotsa, daughter of Pharaoh Cingris, the celebrated monarch of the Scriptures, “which knew not Joseph.”

P.—But what can this have to do with the history of Ireland?

A.—I premised that you would lose your patience. From the Princess Scotsa, say these authorities, the Irish people in after times assumed the name of Scoti. By this lady, Niul had a son, whom he called Gadelas: this youth having been bitten by a serpent, was healed by Moses; which circumstance cemented so strong a friendship between the parties, that Niul undertook to supply the Israelites with provisions in their projected flight to the promised land; but becoming fearful of his royal father-in-law's revenge, he judged it would be the safer plan to accompany the great lawgiver in his expedition; but the next day, Pharaoh being drowned in the Red Sea, whose waters (as it is happily expressed by an Irish poet)

“Covered all his host, and in their course
Swept away sixty thousand foot and fifty thousand horse.”

Niul was thus relieved from his anxieties, and returned to his former settlement in Egypt; where living long enough to see his children capable of bearing arms, he peacefully expired. Gadelas himself performed no me-

morable exploit, but from him the posterity of Niul received the name of Gadelians, who in the course of two or three generations becoming a numerous tribe, were expelled from Egypt. Seeking various places of settlement without success, at length they arrived in Gothland, where they continued one hundred and fifty years; at the expiration of which they proceeded to Spain, then governed by the posterity of Tubal. The Gadelians, under their leader Breogan, attacked the Spaniards, and took possession of the country. This warlike prince had ten sons, one of whom, called Bille, became the father of the celebrated Milesius, the parent of the Milesian race in Ireland.

P.—I was always deluded with a notion that the Milesians came from the country of Miletus, in the Lesser Asia; and that somehow or other they were the heroes of those unknown fables, the Milesian Tales, so much spoken of by the ancient critics.

A.—Nothing is more remote than the identity of the two people. Our Gadelian, Milesius, having a taste for travel, left Spain, and visited Scythia, the country of his great ancestor Niul; where he was courteously received by the king, and obtained his daughter in marriage. But that monarch becoming jealous of the favour which the stranger had acquired with his subjects, formed a design to take away the life of this young hero; who discovering the plot, very unceremoniously killed his father-in-law, and escaped to his ships. Steering to the coast of Egypt, he was hospitably entertained by Pharaoh Nectonebus; and for his great services rendered in a war against the Ethiopians, rewarded with another wife, the Princess Scotsa.

P.—This seems to have been a favourite name with the Egyptian princesses.

A.—Encouraged by a prediction that the Gadelians

should enjoy an island situated in the west, Milesius with his two wives left Egypt, and by rather a circuitous route towards Ireland; they reached the isle of Gothland, in the Baltic Sea; hence they sailed away to Spain, after plundering Albania in their voyage.

P.—These adventures of Milesius are evidently a second version of the history of his ancestor Niul.

A.—Finding Spain overrun by the Goths and other plundering nations, Milesius joined his forces with the remnant of the old Gadelians, and in fifty-four battles drove the intruders from that country. This monarch had thirty-two sons, twenty-four of whom were illegitimate. He died shortly after this renewed conquest of Spain, having sent his son Ith to explore Ireland.

P.—The patriarch Milesius it appears then never set his foot upon Irish ground.

A.—Ith having died from a wound, the Gadelian race, on the report of his companions, prepared to invade Ireland; which we may recollect was at this time governed by the Tuatha de Danans, who, as was before observed, were powerful necromancers; and on the present exigency, by the force of magic, they cast so thick a cloud around the island, that it appeared to the invaders in the form of a hog's back. Terrible battles both by land and sea ensued, the result of which was the conquest of Ireland by Heber and Heremon, two of the son of Milesius, who divided the country between them, in the year B. C. 1267.

F.—This is truly a period of great antiquity; but really the nice accuracy of the dates in Irish history is one of the points to be admired.

A.—Concord between these brethren did not long continue. The wife of Heber desiring three certain fertile vallies which fell to the lot of Heremon, a destructive conflict was the consequence, in which Heber was

slain, and Heremon continued to reign alone for fourteen years. But both these illustrious brothers are remembered with equal respect, and are considered as the distinct ancestors from whom the noble families of the Milesian race derive their origin. From Heber have sprung the O'Briens, Macarthys, O'Carrolls, O'Haras; and from Heremon the O'Neils, O'Connors, O'Flahertys, O'Rourkes; with several others on both sides.

F.—How modern is the pedigree even of the house of Bourbon itself, compared to this Irish lineage! The pretension to high descent has affected even some of the common people of Ireland with a ludicrous assumption of importance: Bishop Berkeley said, that a kitchen wench in his family refused to carry out cinders, because she was a genuine Milesian.^a

A.—The royal successors of Heber and Heremon were in number one hundred and seventy-one; they were chosen from both families. The most celebrated of these kings was Ollam Fodla, who flourished about nine hundred and fifty years before Christ: he is said to have established a grand seminary of learning, and instituted the Fes, or a triennial convocation of the provincial princes, priests, and poets; in which assembly the affairs of law and government were discussed, and the events of the time inserted in an authentic chronicle, called the Psalter of Tara, from the place of the meeting, in the county of Meath. But every regulation proved insufficient to restrain the disorders of the nation, as the pretended history contains little else than that each king began to reign in such a year, and in a short time was slain by the gallant warrior who succeeded him.

P.—But in a line of one hundred and seventy-one

^a Plowden, State of Ireland, Preface.

kings, is there no other than the monarch who bore the beautiful name of Ollam Fodla, that performed any actions worthy of remembrance?

A.—In the list drawn out in Keating's book, not a single name besides occurs that was ever heard of out of Ireland, if we except Brian Boiromhe, who lived so recently as Anno Domini 1027, and whom the Irish reverence as a great warrior and powerful monarch.

F.—These ridiculous fictions sink under the weight of their own intrinsic absurdity; they are evidently the work of fabulists, who had attained some knowledge of the sacred writings. Though we remain in uncertainty as to the exact date of their invention, most of the personages of the history are mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis, who wrote in the twelfth century, and several of them even by Nennius, who wrote so early as the ninth.

P.—But rejecting such idle anilities as unworthy attention, let me ask what is really ascertained of the state of Ireland before the invasion of Henry the Second?

A.—Ireland was early known to the Greeks by the name of Ierne,^a which, with its variations into Hibernia and Juverna, are supposed to be merely modifications of the native term Eri, signifying the country of the west. That its original inhabitants were Celts, the language yet spoken by their descendants clearly evinces; and that their first migration was from Britain, the contiguity of the two countries renders more than probable: yet it is clear from these old fables, that an opinion has always prevailed of a portion of its population being derived from Spain. Nennius^b says, that various leaders, some of whom he calls Scoti or Scythæ, arrived at several times from Spain, and settled in Ireland; and

^a Orpheus in Argonaut.

^b Hist. c. 1—9.

though no authentic data or traces of the arrival of such a colony can now be found, the notion is by no means destitute of probability. Sir James Ware^a asserts, that in Ireland are evidently two races of people: "The inhabitants of the northern and eastern coasts being," says he, "of a square, set stature, with short, broad faces, thick lips, hollow eyes, and noses cocked up; the natives along the western coast resemble the Spaniards in their persons, tall and slender, finely limbed, with grave, sedate countenances, long eyebrows, and dark hair."

P.—The vestiges of a Phœnician settlement you would be disposed to treat as equally fabulous with the Milesian story.

A.—It seems to be merely a part of it. That the Phœnician navigators, in their commercial voyages to the Land of Tin, might occasionally touch upon the Irish coast, is probable enough; but to presume that they established a colony, from the alleged resemblance of the Irish to the Punic tongue, is evidently absurd, the Irish alphabet differing very little from the Roman. There is no evidence to prove that the Irish were acquainted with letters before the introduction of Christianity by St. Patrick; their oldest authentic MSS., the Annals of Ulster, and Innisfallen, and the Psalter of Cashel, being so late as the tenth century. Of no greater validity is the set of mystic characters called the Ogam, or Tree Alphabets, as they are nothing more than a rude and bungling sort of cypher, scarcely, if at all, of an earlier date than the MSS. As the opulent traders of the Mediterranean made no settlement even in Britain, what should have induced them to waste their time in such a country as Ireland, which is represented by

^a Works concerning Ireland, vol. 2.

all ancient writers as in a state peculiarly savage and repulsive.

F.—Strabo^a asserts, that the Irish were very voracious anthropophagi; but he candidly adds that he relates this circumstance on authority which merited no great confidence.

A.—Pomponius Mela^b describes them as paying no regard to the distinctions of right and wrong; but Tacitus,^c in an age somewhat later, says that they differed not much from the Britons. Yet even after the subjugation of Ireland by Henry, Giraldus Cambrensis, who made a voyage for the express purpose of observing the country, draws no very favourable picture of Irish manners, representing the natives as utterly barbarous, and despising cultivation.

P.—But by what strange miracle did Ireland at one period acquire the appellation of the Isle of Saints?

A.—Ireland from some unknown cause, perhaps from its having been considered as one of the fortunate islands described by Homer and Hesiod, had early obtained the name of the Sacred Island. It is thus designated by Festus Avienus, a writer of the age of Theodosius:

Ast hinc duobus in sacram sic Insulam
Dixere Prisci, solibus cursus rati est.^d

Hence to the Sacred Isle, her ancient name,
Two suns will waft you, so delivers fame.

Ireland has also been called Ogygia, after the name of an ancient, and probably fabulous, island described by Plutarch.

P.—Perhaps a mistake might arise from confounding the native appellation of *Eri*—western, with the Greek *ιερος*—sacred.

^a Lib. 4.

^b Lib. 3.

^c Agric. Vita.

^d Orre. Marit.

A.—It was not however to these ancient opinions that Ireland owes her Christian renown, but to the effects wrought by the preaching of St. Patrick, a native of North Britain,^a in the fifth century. To the doctrines taught by this celebrated apostle, the Irish gave a ready credence; and notwithstanding that his biography has been disfigured by a whole volume of imputed miracles, the chief of which is his delivery of Ireland from serpents and noxious reptiles by the efficacy of his prayers, he yet appears to have united much discretion with his zeal: under his auspices a school was established at Armagh, which soon became famous; and during the distractions which pervaded Britain, from the invasion of the Saxons, many British students resorted thither for instruction; which example was followed by the Saxons themselves, after they embraced Christianity.^b From this seminary many devout scholars proceeded, who preached the Christian faith; amongst them was St. Columba,^c who founded in the Isle of Iona the religious establishment, so long celebrated in North Britain, and whose ruins still arrest the attention of the antiquary.

F.—It was then to the piety of such missionaries, though their names are no longer remembered, and to their successful labours in various parts of Europe, that Ireland became indebted for its distinguished appellation, the Isle of Saints.^d

A.—But however creditable might be these efforts to the ecclesiastical order, every endeavour to reclaim the innate turbulence of the Irish people became abortive. The island, divided into five kingdoms, besides several subordinate petty chieftainships, in all which were factions and contending claimants for power, un-

^a Bede, Hist. lib. 3.^b Ibid.^c Ibid.^d Camden.

restrained by sufficient authority, presented such a scene of anarchy and discord, that the piratical incursions of the Danes, Ostmen, or Eastmen, as they were sometimes called, in the ninth century, which in other countries inflicted desolation, were in Ireland the harbingers of improvement.

F.—The Danes, if they did not absolutely found the cities of Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick, at least secured them by fortifications. But the various petty attacks of the Ostmen are attended with so much confusion, that little reliance can be placed upon their history, even were it worth ascertaining. Several settlements of the Danes continued till the invasion of Henry.

A.—One of the most memorable transactions of these ages, much celebrated by the Irish poets, was the defeat of Magnus the Barefoot, king of Norway,^a who having established himself in the Isle of Man, made an unsuccessful attack upon Ireland, in which he was slain, at the beginning of the twelfth century. The Irish in this repulse exhibited somewhat of that union of counsel, the want of which, either in good or evil purposes, has always been so striking a defect in their national character. Henry, after he had received the Pope's bull sanctioning his design, had deferred the undertaking; and it was reserved for Richard, called Strongbow, from his dexterity in the use of that weapon, Earl of Strigul (a castle near Chepstow,) and also Earl of Pembroke, of the great house of Clare, to be the first Englishman who gained a military advantage in Ireland.

P.—But a private nobleman could not, from his own authority, act in a matter of such importance.

^a Chronicle of the Kings of Man, apud Camden.

A.—Dermot Mac-Murrough, king of Leinster, a cruel and licentious tyrant, had carried off Dovergilda, the wife of O'Rourke, prince of Breffny:^a this exploit, though common with the Irish, had provoked the resentment of the husband, who, strengthened by the alliance of Roderic O'Connor, king of Connaught, expelled Dermot from the island. The exiled prince had recourse to Henry, then in Guienne, who readily entered into the plan of restoring Dermot, as it could not but facilitate his design of making conquests in Ireland; but being embarrassed with some commotions in his French provinces, he gave Dermot no further assistance than issuing letters patent, empowering all his subjects to aid the Irish prince.^b It was on this permission that Earl Strigul, hoping to amend his impaired fortunes, accepted the offers of Dermot, which were the promise of his daughter Eva in marriage, with the succession to his dominions. Having collected about six hundred soldiers, some of whom were knights and men of quality, the earl passed the sea with his followers in several detached parties, and so completely subdued the Irish, that Dermot was immediately restored to his throne (1172).^c

P.—Six hundred men seem a small force to overthrow a populous nation.

A.—The English soldiers fought in complete armour, a mode of defence unknown to the Irish. Strigul having now married Eva, and the death of Dermot soon following, the earl became King of Leinster, and prepared to extend his authority over the whole island. But Henry, jealous of this sudden and great exaltation of a subject, judged it time to attack Ireland in person; and landing at Waterford with a considerable force, no opposition

^a Girald. Cambren.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

was made by the natives, and in his progress through the country, he had little further occupation than to receive the homage of his new subjects.^a

P.—The regal views of Strongbow were consequently reduced to the limits of a subject's allegiance.

A.—The earl consented to hold his demesnes in *capite* of the king, and was made Seneschal of Ireland: most of the Irish chieftains retained possession of their ancient territories, on promise of obedience and agreeing to pay tribute: and thus by a few trivial exploits was Ireland annexed to the English crown.

F.—Happy would it have been had a more generous policy been pursued by its conquerors, who instead of introducing a system of law and equity, committed an arbitrary and irresponsible power to the hands of its governors, who often tyrannized without mercy over the lives and properties of the rude and undefended inhabitants.

A.—Perhaps the peculiar situation of the English made such an independent authority almost a matter of necessity; such was the uninviting state of Ireland, that few persons were willing to undertake a settlement, and those few found themselves surrounded by enemies, whose hostility it was difficult to resist; and what was singular, the colonists, instead of reforming the wild Irish by their example, became themselves assimilated to the barbarous customs of the country.^b

F.—The distribution, too, of property in Ireland was calculated to prevent for ever all improvement in the cultivation of land; since at the decease of a proprietor, his estate was not shared by his children, but the chief of the sept or tribe made a new partition at his own discretion; and to this was added tanistry, so

^a Girald. Camb.

^b Spenser.

called from the tanist, or successor, being elected during the life of the reigning chieftain. The tanist becoming impatient at the delay of his power, often accelerated the death of the possessor; to such violence the Brehon-law, a word signifying a judge, afforded complete protection; as, if the murderer could pay the *eric* or price of the blood of his victim, it was sufficient.

A.—These pernicious customs continued till the age of James the First; but in justice to the Irish it should not be forgotten, that they more than once entreated to be put within the pale of English law, and strange to say, were as constantly refused.^a

F.—Certain it is that Ireland, during the long period from the reign of Henry the Second to that of James the First, reaped no benefit from its connexion with England; and even at the present hour the advantages arising to both nations are not exactly those which might have been anticipated. Are we to excuse the more powerful country on the same ground that Plato defended the wisdom of the Creator in the formation of the universe, against those who objected its supposed imperfections, discoverable in the sufferings of its inhabitants, by replying that there was an inherent intractability in matter, which even omnipotence itself could not subdue.

A.—The Irish will scarcely thank you for such a solution of the difficulty. Henry soon left Ireland, which he visited no more, and returned to Normandy (1172,) where he found legates from the Pope; and by singular dexterity of management he extricated himself from the censures of the Holy See; but Becket's death secured

^a Sir John Davis.

the immunities of the clergy, as that order of men continued exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil courts^a in criminal matters, and so remained till the reformation. During the quarrel with Becket, the Empress Matilda died in Normandy: she was an extremely useful counsellor to her son; her example of resigning such vast power, and continuing to live quietly in the world without aspiring to rule, was equally singular as praiseworthy.

F.—And may be said to have redeemed those early errors of pride and want of feeling during her disputed succession with King Stephen.

A.—Henry, though arrived at the pinnacle of worldly success, found a disturbance to his happiness in the undutiful conduct of his children, whom it is necessary now to particularize. We have already seen that his eldest son, Henry, had been honoured with the ceremony of a coronation: the young prince needed not this excitement to his ambitious spirit. During the solemnity, the king, wishing to bestow the greatest dignity on the occasion, condescended to officiate as one of the retinue; on which the archbishop of York remarking that no prince was ever more royally served, the young king replied, “It was nothing extraordinary that the son of a count^b should serve the son of a king.” This observation, which might have passed as an innocent pleasantry, much hurt the feelings of Henry, who whispered in the archbishop’s ear, “I repent me, I repent me of untimely advancements.”^c

P.—By some parents it would have been received as even an oblique compliment.

A.—Henry’s second son was the bold and fiery Richard, who was invested with his mother’s province

^a M. Paris. Hoveden.

^b Mat. Paris.

^c Hist. Quadra.

of Guienne. The third son was Geoffrey, who had obtained Britany in right of his wife Constance. And the fourth son, John, was to receive for his appanage the new conquest of Ireland. These princes, if we except the last, were brave and accomplished; but the undutiful behaviour of the whole towards a most liberal and indulgent parent is without a parallel in history.

P.—But cannot we find some latent cause in the conduct of the parent, which, though it might not justify, would yet explain the disobedience of the children?

F.—We must rather seek a cause in the jealousy of their mother, Queen Eleanor, who, provoked at her husband's continued neglect and various gallantries, persuaded her sons that they were entitled to present possession of the territories destined for them by Henry;^a she instigated them secretly to flee to the court of France, and even meditated an escape herself, disguised in man's apparel;^b but being seized by orders from the king, she was thrown into Winchester Castle, where she remained in a sort of confinement during her husband's life.^c

A.—These domestic misfortunes gave Henry the utmost disquiet, and placed even his throne itself in jeopardy. The French king embraced the cause of young Henry, who had married his daughter, and who now demanded a present share of his father's authority; and the King of Scotland, with other princes, thinking it a favourable opportunity to abridge Henry's power, entered into the confederacy. In an interview with Louis, Henry had the mortification of seeing his three elder sons in the train of his mortal enemy; and though he made the offer of half his revenue for their establishment, the

^a Ralph de Diceto.

^b Gervas.

^c Ibid.

treaty was broken off, and the English monarch was compelled to arm for the defence of his kingdom.^a

P.—The queen, in the effect of her revenge, had then at least the satisfaction of embarrassing her husband.

A.—Many of the turbulent nobility, displeased with the vigilant government of Henry, which restrained their licentiousness, joined the party of the prince, and the earls of Leicester and Chester openly declared war against their sovereign. In this emergency Henry's principal resource was in the clergy, whose favour he propitiated by an unequalled act of humiliation. On his return from Normandy (July 1174,) as soon as he came within sight of the church of Canterbury, he dismounted from his horse, and walked with bare and bleeding feet to the tomb of Becket, where prostrating himself before the shrine of the saint, he remained in prayer and fasting a whole day, and watched all night the holy relics. To add to the effect of this preposterous farce, for such ostentation is not like real penitence, he assembled a chapter of the monks, disrobed himself before them, put scourges into their hands, and presented his bare shoulders to the lashes which these ecclesiastics inflicted with no common severity.^b

F.—This conduct of Henry, however blameable for its hypocrisy, is a singular instance of self-command, in overcoming the strongest natural repugnance when the supposed necessity of circumstances required the sacrifice.

A.—Henry, fatigued with these exertions, was seized with a fever; but on the fifth day of his illness the happy effect of his repentance became apparent. A messenger arrived at the palace-gate, who for a long time was re-

^a Hoveden. Brompton.

^b Hoveden. Gervas.

fused admittance: at length his importunities prevailed, and he announced himself to the king as the servant of Ralph de Glanville. To the question, "Is Glanville well?" he replied, "My lord is well, and has now in his custody your enemy the King of Scots." "Repeat these words," exclaimed Henry, in a transport of joy; and leaping out of bed, he demanded the letters; which contained intelligence so gratifying that he was soon restored to his usual health.^a The defeat of the Scottish monarch, William the Lyon, took place on the very day that Henry received absolution from the monks at Canterbury.

F.—This victory was the first step of that great ascendancy which England ever afterward maintained in the affairs of Scotland; for William, who had wantonly engaged in an unjust aggression, was compelled to purchase his ransom, not only by a large sum of money, but what was more humiliating, by stipulating to do homage for his whole *kingdom*;^b which ceremony was soon afterward performed by himself and all his barons and prelates, in the cathedral at York, before Henry in person.

A.—The circumstances of the capture were somewhat singular. The Scottish king having ravaged the north of England with an army of eighty thousand men, who were dispersed in various detachments, lay encamped with a small attendance at Alnwick. Ralph de Glanville, the celebrated justiciary, who appears to have been as good a soldier as a lawyer, informed of this particular, set out with a moderate force from Newcastle; towards evening, he arrived at Alnwick unperceived, under cover of a thick mist, which sud-

^a Gul. Neubrig. lib. 2.

^b Hoveden. Brompton.

denly dispersing, disclosed his army to the Scottish monarch, who concluded that it was his own people; but the sight of the English banners soon convincing him of the mistake, he gallantly attacked Glanville with no greater force than one hundred men; but being surrounded and taken prisoner, he was placed on horseback, and with his legs tied beneath the animal's belly, conducted to Newcastle (1174).^a

P.—It is seldom that an advantage is gained by the stronger party over his weaker neighbour with such perfect justice.

A.—This was the full tide of Henry's success; for a few months previous, the Earl of Leicester having landed with ten thousand Flemings, and being joined in Suffolk by Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, he proceeded with this army of artificers, apparently very formidable, into the heart of the kingdom; but being met by the king's forces, the Flemings were speedily defeated,^b and gladly compounded for a safe retreat to their own country. A whimsical circumstance is said to have attended this defeat. That Leicester might surprise St. Edmundsbury, he brought his troops out of the direct road; and whilst his army paused upon the heath, the soldiers began to dance and to sing a ridiculous couplet:

Hoppe Wyliken, hoppe Wyliken,
England is myne and thyne.^c

In allusion I suppose to William, the king of Scotland. But whilst thus employed, Henry's forces coming suddenly upon them, the Flemings were all either killed or taken prisoners.

P.—It must be admitted that they chose a most

^a Gul. Neubrig. lib. 2.

^b Mat. Paris.

^c Lambarde, Dict.

unseasonable moment for their diversion, reminding us of Mr. Bayes's practice in the Rehearsal :

Well then to serious business we'll advance,
But first and foremost let us have a dance.

F.—Hugh Bigod, the earl of Norfolk, is also celebrated by three doggrel lines, having fortified his castle at Bungay with such strength as to occasion this note of defiance :

Were I in my castle of Bungay,
Upon the river Waveney,
I would ne care for the King of Cockney.^a

But he was soon compelled to lower his tone, being obliged to surrender not only this castle of Bungay, but all his other possessions. It is remarkable how little these ancient barons esteemed the security and happiness of the kingdom when placed against their own views of aggrandisement.

A.—Henry being completely victorious in England, the King of France began to feel disquietude, and proposed a conference, in which the English monarch granted much less advantageous terms to his sons than those which he had formerly offered ;^c and thus happily extricating himself from these difficulties, several years of his life were passed in providing for the safety and prosperity of his dominions.

P.—Do any vestiges of Henry's institutions yet remain ?

A.—The appointment of itinerant justices, who performed the circuit and decided causes in the several counties, was found highly beneficial in protecting the interest of the subordinate classes against the power of the barons, and continues with little alteration as to its arrangement to the present day. Some other improve-

^a Camden, Brit.

^b Dugdale, Baronage, vol. i.

^c Hoveden. Brompton.

ments in the administration of the law introduced by Henry have become obsolete from subsequent refinements. Superstition was still the prevalent feeling of the age: the merits of Becket's martyrdom increased daily in repute; even the King of France was induced, from a spirit of pure devotion, to make a pilgrimage to his tomb (1176),^a for the purpose of obtaining the restoration to health of his eldest son; probably thinking himself, as Hume pleasantly observes, well entitled to the favour of the saint, on account of their ancient intimacy; and hoping that Becket, whom he had protected while on earth, would not now, when he was so highly exalted in heaven, forget his old friend and benefactor. As the prince happily recovered, the monks were loud in establishing the efficacy of Becket's intercession. Louis not long after died, and was succeeded by this son, who governed France with so much eclat under the name of Philip Augustus.

P.—As the story of Henry's reign seems now to languish, we have leisure to inquire the subsequent fate of his undutiful sons.

A.—The eldest of these, Henry, having renewed his connexions with the court of France, was seized with a fever at a castle near Turenne. Finding his death approach, he was stricken with remorse, and sent a message to his father, expressing his contrition, and entreated the favour of a visit; but the king, who had so often experienced his violence and ingratitude, apprehending the illness to be feigned, refused to comply: he sent him however a ring, in token of forgiveness. Soon after receiving intelligence of the death and sincere repentance of his son (1183,) Henry was afflicted with the deepest sorrow, and thrice fainted. The prince,

^a Hoveden. Gervas.

who died in the twenty-eighth year of his age,^a possessed an elegant person and amiable manners; his father's indulgence in his early years formed too strong a contrast to the restraints which seemed in later life to be imposed on his inclinations. About two years after this event, Henry's third son, Geoffrey, was killed in a tournament^b at Paris, leaving his wife, Constance of Brittany, pregnant with a son, who afterwards received the name of Arthur.

P.—Poetry can immortalize what history would in vain endeavour to preserve. How little would be remembered of Constance and Arthur, but for the embalming muse of Shakspeare!

A.—The conduct of Henry to his son Richard, now the heir of his dominions, admits some doubts of its equity. A young princess of France, Adelais, was contracted to this prince; but Henry, if we may credit the scandal of the day, becoming enamoured of her graces and beauty, delayed the marriage, in the hope that he might himself espouse her, by procuring a divorce from Queen Eleanor on the score of consanguinity; it is even said that Henry had a son by the French princess.^c Though Richard it appears was not in love with this lady, yet feeling his honour insulted, like Achilles for the loss of his Briseis, which Grecian hero he much resembled in temper as well as in valour, he burst into a transport of fury, and intriguing with the King of France, declared war against his father; and such was his popularity, that the chief barons of the French provinces adhering to his cause, Henry was obliged to submit to very mortifying terms of reconciliation.^d Nor was this his greatest trial, for when he demanded a list of those barons to whom he was bound to grant a par-

^a Bened. Abb. Hoveden.

^b Gervas.

^c Hoveden.

^d Ibid.

don for their connexions with Richard, he found at the head of them the name of his youngest son, John, who had always been his favourite, and who had even excited the jealousy of Richard on account of this partiality.^a We cannot read without a powerful feeling the excess of anguish which this unexpected disclosure of John's ingratitude occasioned: the unhappy father broke into expressions of the utmost sorrow and despair, cursed the day of his birth, and bestowed upon his undutiful offspring a malediction which he could never be prevailed on to retract.^b A fever shortly followed, which deprived this great monarch of his life, at the castle of Chinon, near Saumur, in the fifty-seventh year of his age (1189).^c

F.—In singular contrast to the unkindness of Henry's other children was the conduct of his natural son, Geoffrey, by the fair Rosamond; who being informed of his father's illness, hastened to Chinon, where finding him so oppressed with the violence of the disorder that he could not sit up, Geoffrey raised him from his bed, and affectionately supported the head of his parent upon his bosom. Henry fetching a deep sigh, turned his languid eyes upon the young man, and said, "My dearest son, as you have in all changes of fortune behaved yourself most dutifully to me, should it please God to restore me to health, I will place you among the greatest and most powerful subjects of my dominions." "I have no wish," replied Geoffrey, "but that you may recover and be happy:" when, unable to restrain his tears, he left the chamber; but hearing that no hopes of life remained, he returned to perform the last duties to his father, who, roused by his lamentations, made an effort to express a desire that Geoffrey

^a Bened. Abb.^b Hoveden.^c Ibid.

should obtain the archbishopric of York; and giving a ring from his finger, with his last blessing to his son, sank down exhausted on his pillow.^a

A.—On the seventh day of the king's illness, all hope of recovery vanished; and at his own request he was carried to the foot of the altar, and received there the last consolations of the Romish religion. At the moment he expired, the prelates left the church, and his attendants shamefully stripped the corpse, and carried off every thing valuable.^b Richard, who was not destitute of generosity, afterwards visiting the dead body of his father, was stricken with remorse for his past undutiful conduct; and as the attendants observed that at that instant the blood gushed from the mouth and nostrils of the deceased, he exclaimed, agreeably to a vulgar superstition, that he was his father's murderer.^c

F.—This excitement of feeling was happily followed by a deep and lasting sense of contrition.

A.—Henry the Second was a prince of great abilities and wisdom, and the most powerful monarch that had hitherto filled the throne of England: his frame was well proportioned, though somewhat too much inclined to corpulency, which he endeavoured to reduce by such active exercise as constantly to fatigue his companions;^d his countenance was lively and engaging, but dignified; his natural talents well cultivated by study; preferring peace, but not afraid of war. His character has been observed to resemble that of his maternal grandfather, Henry the First; but fortunately his ambition found less criminal objects on which to exert itself: that it was unbounded we may judge from

^a Girald. Camb. in *Anglia Sacra*, vol. 2.

^b Hoveden.

^c M. Paris.

^d Girald. Camb.

his saying, that the whole world was not sufficient for a great prince.^a

F.—As Henry's domestic misfortunes originally sprang from a marriage which, in common life, we might call mercenary, it will not meet with so much sympathy, as had it been entirely undeserved.

A.—His parental indulgence, which though it might sharpen the sting of filial ingratitude, was certainly in the early years of his children too indiscriminating and extreme. But whatever unhappiness afflicted Henry, the kingdom of England had never been in so flourishing a condition; and it made during his reign such large advances in civilization as to place it on a level with France, to which hitherto it had been confessedly inferior. The Norman barons having now struck a deep root, became gradually incorporated with the old Saxon race, whom they at first oppressed and despised; and no longer fearing the instability of their possessions, from the resumption of former proprietors, they assumed an independence of the crown to which their ancestors did not aspire, and treated the people with an unwonted degree of indulgence: commerce extended itself, and the wealth of the inhabitants of the towns proportionally increased, particularly of London and Bristol.

F.—But such was the licentiousness of the age, that it was the custom of the metropolis for the sons even of considerable citizens to associate for the purpose of violence and plunder: some of these rioters had murdered the brother of a nobleman; another party having attacked the house of a rich merchant, was opposed by the master, who cut off the right hand of the first robber that entered: the man being thus compelled to reveal the names of his confederates, it appeared that John

^a Girald. Camb.

Senex, esteemed one of the richest and best born citizens, was the principal leader, for which offence he was hanged, the king firmly refusing an offer of five hundred marks for his pardon.^a

A.—Nor was the turbulence of the times confined to the citizens. A cardinal legate having arrived in England, and holding a synod, the archbishops of Canterbury and York violently disputed which should have the honour of sitting at his right hand; and the monks and retainers of the see of Canterbury taking up the quarrel of their master, fell with such fury upon his rival as to throw him upon the ground, trample him under foot, and leave him half dead from the bruises which he received.^b In this condition, ragged, bloody, and dusty as he was, the baffled prelate went lamenting to the king, who only laughed at him, telling him that he was well enough served.^c

F.—Another ecclesiastical misfortune occurred to the prior and monks of St. Swithin; who complaining to the king that the bishop of Winchester had cut off three dishes from their table, were asked how many they had left? “Ten only,” replied the disconsolate monks. “I have never more than three myself,” exclaimed Henry, “and I enjoin your bishop to reduce you to the same number.”^d

A.—Heraclius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, who, as we have seen, dedicated the Temple Church in 1185, arrived in England, for the purpose of persuading Henry to undertake a crusade. The king offered money, but declined taking the Cross in person. “It is not money we want, but a leader,” said the disappointed ecclesiastic; “and he whom thou hast deserted will in turn de-

^a Bened. Abb.

^c Godwin de Præsul.

^b Brompton. Gul. Neub. lib. 2.

^d Giral. Camb. in Anglia Sacra, vol. 2.

sert thee." Henry growing angry with this unreasonable freedom, the patriarch upbraided him with his conduct towards Becket, saying, "You may kill me as you killed St. Thomas; I had as soon be murdered by you in England, as by the Saracens in Syria; for you are worse than any Saracen." Henry still excused himself from visiting the Holy Land, on the ground that he apprehended the rebellion of his sons. "And no wonder," exclaimed Heraclius, "for from the devil they came, and to the devil they will go."^a To understand this notable piece of impertinence, we are to recollect that Henry's great-grandmother, the Countess of Anjou, was reputed to be a witch; and one day, being compelled by her husband to attend mass against her will, she flew resentfully out of a window in the chapel, and was never heard of more.^b The reign of Henry the Second will be ever memorable on account of the reduction of Ireland, and is well worthy the attention of the historian, as the epoch in which the long oppressed Anglo-Saxon race began to amalgamate in a national mass with their Norman conquerors.

^a Brompton, 1145.

^b Ibid. 1045.

DISSERTATION VI.

SECTION II.

RICHARD I. - - - A. D. 1189.

F.—As the project of delivering the Holy Sepulchre absorbed the whole attention of Richard, and formed the mainspring of his actions, it gives to the history of his reign a character of unity of design almost as strict as a rigid critic of the Aristotelian school could require in the construction of an epic poem.

A.—The contrition of Richard for his undutiful conduct to his father was not only sincere at the moment, but influenced him in the choice of his servants; those ministers who had remained faithful to their late master being rewarded and continued in their office.^a To his mother, Queen Eleanor, the new monarch entrusted a considerable share of the government; and conferred upon his brother John so large a portion of wealth and honours,^b as unhappily put into the power of that prince the means of future annoyance. The coronation of Richard soon followed, and was the most splendid that had hitherto been seen in England:^c it was rendered remarkable by a massacre of the Jews. Though the king had prohibited any of these people from appearing at that ceremony, a few, presuming on the merit of bringing large presents, ventured to approach the hall in which the sovereign dined; but being discovered by the bystanders, they were pursued by the populace and slain,^d under the pretence of zeal against infidels.

^a Hoveden. M. Paris.^b Brompton.^c Hoveden.^d Hemingford.

F.—A crusade then was set on foot of less danger and at a shorter distance than the Holy Land.

A.—The slaughter of this unhappy race extended to most parts of the kingdom: at York no fewer than five hundred, who had retired for safety to the castle, which they found themselves unable to defend, murdered their wives and children, and setting fire to the place, perished in the flames.^a

F.—The great wealth of the Jews, much of it acquired by extortion, was the exciting cause of this persecution, carried on under the name of religion; it was found highly convenient, no doubt, to have a debt cancelled by the death of the creditor.

A.—Though it does not appear that the king bore any part in these shameful transactions, yet his whole soul being fixed on the recovery of the Holy Land from those “heathen hounds,” the Saracens, into whose hands Jerusalem had lately fallen, he amassed treasure necessary for the execution of his purpose by every kind of rapacity:^b offices of the highest trust and power were exposed to sale; Hugh de Pudsey, bishop of Durham, having bought the earldom of Northumberland, Richard merrily said, “Am not I a cunning craftsman, that can make a young earl of an old bishop?”^c And on being remonstrated with on the danger of this extreme dissipation of his revenue, he replied, that he would sell London itself, could he find a purchaser.^d He remitted to William the Lion, king of Scotland, for ten thousand marks, the vassalage of that kingdom;^e for which he is much blamed by some historians, by others commended, as securing the quiet of a turbulent neighbour during his absence.

^a Hemingford.

^b M. Paris.

^c Sim. Dunelm.

^d Knyghton. Heming.

^e Hoveden.

F.—Of an event so new and unprecedented in the history of mankind as the crusades, it is natural to inquire the causes as well as the consequences.

A.—The cause was a combined motive of superstitious zeal and military ardour. Pilgrimages to the shrine of a favourite saint, to Rome, and to Jerusalem, had for several ages been considered as highly meritorious, especially to the Holy Land, which being the scene of the most memorable religious transactions, was calculated to inspire the deepest feelings of awe and enthusiasm. The original Mahometan conquerors of Jerusalem gave little disturbance to strangers, who, on paying a moderate tribute, were permitted to perform their religious duties, and return in peace. But the Holy City having fallen into the hands of the Turks, the pilgrims became exposed to various insults, robberies, extortions, and outrages, which on their return they magnified in such terms as to excite the pity and indignation of Europe.

F.—Most persons have a singularly confused apprehension respecting the adversaries against whom the crusaders engaged.

A.—Jerusalem was first lost to the Christian world in the year 637, by the conquering sword of the Caliph Omar, five years only after the death of Mahomet; and the Holy City had continued in the possession of the Saracens till its capture in the year 1065 or 1070, by the Turcomans or Turks, a fierce and barbarous people, who had long dwelt on the shores of the Caspian Sea, and now overrunning various provinces of Asia, alike threatened the security of the Arabian caliphs as well as of the Greek emperors.

P.—If the safety of Europe was endangered by the overwhelming force of these untameable barbarians, it

was surely politic in the various kingdoms of the west to unite for the defence of its barriers.

A.—We may be well assured that no such rational motive was the cause of the crusade, since to whatever danger the Greek empire might have been exposed, the European powers were far too selfish and indifferent to arm for its defence; and had such been the cause of action, a moderate army would have been sufficient for its support: the myriads who engaged in the crusade could never have been excited by the apprehension of a remote political danger befalling an empire of whose very name the greater part were too ignorant even to have heard.

F.—Nor does it very clearly appear how the recovery of Jerusalem, which had been occupied more than four centuries by the Mahometans, could have much contributed to the security of Europe; and besides, after a possession of twenty years, the Turks had actually given up the Holy City, either by force or treaty, to its former masters, the caliphs of Egypt, two or three years before the commencement of the crusade.

A.—In the beginning of the eleventh century, Pope Hildebrand, or Gregory the Seventh,^a conceived the design of uniting the Christians of the west against the infidels, which might have had a basis of ambitious policy; but the present project was set on foot and executed by an instrument far too humble to be instigated by any other motive than enthusiasm. Peter the Hermit, returning from his pilgrimage, deeply affected with the sufferings to which himself and other Christians had been exposed, ran from province to province, exhorting princes and people to so pious and beneficial a

^a Greg. VII. Epis. 2.

work as the deliverance of the Holy City from those sacrilegious hands into which it had lately fallen.

F.—The advantages which, in the shape of commutations, indulgences, or donations, that might result to the church from a religious war, could not have been overlooked by the reigning Pontiff.

A.—Urban the Second summoned a council at Placentia, 1095, which consisted of four thousand ecclesiastics, and thirty thousand laymen; to this assembly ambassadors from the Greek emperor were introduced, who entreated the assistance of their Christian brethren in the west; and both the Pope and the hermit harangued on the indignity of suffering the Holy City to remain in the hands of the infidels. These topics were well received, but as the audience were chiefly Italians, Urban judged it necessary to hold a second council at Clermont, in France, in the same year; which, as his intention was universally diffused, procured the attendance of a vast multitude of the greatest princes, nobles, and prelates, from every part of Europe. The whole assembly, moved by the pathetic representations of the hermit and the Pope, as if impelled by the immediate inspiration of the Almighty, exclaimed with one voice, “It is the will of God! it is the will of God!”

F.—Such a sentiment could not but be esteemed an indication of the divine presence and approbation, and consequently it became the motto of the sacred standard of the Cross, the symbol chosen by the devout combatants, who wore this object of reproach with the pagan world, affixed on their right shoulder,^a as a badge of their union and profession. It is observable that, in the first crusade,^b all the crosses were red; in the third the French alone preserved that colour, whilst

^a Order. Vital.

^b Ducange, ad vocem, “Crucem assumere.”

green crosses were adopted by the Flemings and white by the English: yet in England the red appears ever to have been and still continues the favourite.

A.—An additional cause to this excitement was a very general expectation that the thousand years from the birth or death of Christ, mentioned in the Revelations, were supposed to be accomplished, and vast numbers of Christians delivered over to the monastic orders their lands and treasures, that they might behold the expected manifestation of their Redeemer on Mount Sion.^a All orders of men deeming the crusade the only road to heaven, became impatient to open their way with the sword to the Holy City:^b nobles, artisans, peasants, priests, even women (concealing their sex under the disguise of armour,) partook of the universal enthusiasm. To furnish supplies for their journey, the dictates of prudence were utterly forgotten: princes alienated whole provinces, nobles their castles, and the peasants their cattle; whilst a plenary indulgence and the absolution of all their sins, perhaps the hope of martyrdom, quieted those weak efforts of rebellious reason which might have disturbed their repose. The multitude of adventurers became so excessive, that the more sagacious leaders, judging that the object of their expedition would be in danger of defeat from this circumstance, prudently permitted an undisciplined crowd of three hundred thousand men to go before, under the command of Peter the Hermit, Walter the Moneyless, and other wild fanatics of the same rank. Peter walked at its head, with a rope about his waist, exhibiting every mark of monkish austerity: he took the road to Constantinople; but as no provision was made for the subsistence of this army on its march, its disorder was

^a Mosheim, vol. 2, cent. 10.

^b Gul. Malmesb. lib. 4.

extreme ; being constrained to exist by plunder, it first fell upon the Jews, and twelve thousand of that unfortunate nation were massacred in Bavaria alone ; but as all the provinces did not abound in Jews to be robbed, the inhabitants attacked this unprovided body of crusaders, and slaughtered vast numbers : the remainder at length arrived at Constantinople.

F.—The Greek princess, Anna Comnena, who wrote a history of these times, strikingly observes, that by this wonderful emigration, Europe, loosened from its foundations, and impelled by its moving principle, seemed in one united body to precipitate itself upon Asia.

A.—The Emperor Alexius Comnenus wisely assisted this formidable rabble to pass the Bosphorus with all convenient speed ; of whom he was as glad to divest his country as of a swarm of locusts. As soon as they arrived in the plains of Asia, they were attacked by Solyman, the Turkish sultan, and the chief part slain, scarcely without resistance. Amongst the leaders fell Walter the Moneyless, who it is said had really acquired a considerable portion of military skill. Peter the Hermit found his way back to Constantinople, and indeed was afterwards present at the capture of the Holy Sepulchre. The more disciplined armies soon after arrived at the imperial city, under the command of Godfrey of Bouillon, a prince of Brabant ; the counts of Vermandois and Toulouse ; Robert, duke of Normandy ; Robert, earl of Flanders ; and various other leaders of distinction. The soldiers of the Cross, when mustered on the banks of the Bosphorus, amounted to the amazing number of one hundred thousand horse and six hundred thousand foot.

P.—A force sufficient surely to have conquered all Asia.

A.—Notwithstanding the intractable spirit and want

of discipline in the crusaders, yet their zeal, courage, and force, carried them irresistibly forward to the completion of their enterprize. With infinite jealousy and alarm, the Greek Emperor, Alexius Comnenus, beheld this mighty host in the neighbourhood of his capital, and his fleet was again put in requisition. The first essay of the croises against the infidels was the siege of Nice, the ancient Nicomedia, and now the seat of the Turkish empire: assisted by the emperor, they became masters of the place in seven weeks. After traversing the Lesser Asia, they defeated Solymán in a great battle at Dorylæum; and in the month of October sat down before Antioch, which after a siege of incredible labour and difficulty, surrendered to their persevering efforts in the following June (1098).

F.—Desperate and critical was the capture. The city of Antioch was surprised in the night; the croises rushed in through the gates, but the citadel refused to surrender; and the victors were encompassed by the innumerable forces of Kerboga, prince of Mosul, who had unexpectedly advanced for the deliverance of the faithful. In this extremity, the Francs collected the remnant of their strength, and in a single onset dispersed or slew the Turks and Arabs to the incredible number, as it is said, of six hundred thousand men; which victory completely broke the force of the Turkish power.

A.—Jerusalem having reverted to its former masters, the Arabian caliphs, whose seat of government was now in Egypt, the soldan of that country would willingly have permitted the Christians of the west to perform their religious ceremonies in the same way as had been exercised by their forefathers.

P.—After a career of conquest purchased at such an expense of blood and treasure, we cannot wonder at

the crusaders being unwilling to accept of any substitute for the possession of the Holy Sepulchre.

A.—These adventurers were now reduced, by the detachments which they had made and the disasters they had suffered, to an effective force no greater than twenty thousand foot and fifteen hundred horse; and it was a year from the capture of Antioch before they found themselves in a condition to attack Jerusalem, which city, after a siege of five weeks, was taken by assault. It is lamentable to relate that the crusaders sullied their victory by actions of the utmost barbarity: not only the numerous garrison, but the inhabitants were indiscriminately put to the sword; neither age nor sex excited mercy; even those who had been promised quarter were inhumanly slaughtered; and the streets of the Holy City for three days were polluted with a promiscuous massacre.^a

F.—Historians, for the sake of presenting a striking contrast, have been fond of relating, that when these triumphant warriors were fatigued with slaughter, they threw aside their arms, advanced with naked feet and bended knees to the Holy Sepulchre, joined there in devout anthems, and burst into tears of penitence and pious gratitude at the accomplishment of their desires.^b

A.—Godfrey of Bouillon, with that modesty which ever distinguished his character, contented himself with the title of Defender of the Holy Sepulchre; but at his lamented death, which took place in a year from his conquest, Jerusalem was erected into a feudal kingdom by his brother Baldwin, with dependant vassals, such

^a The original authorities for the first crusade are contained in a collection of Historians, in two vols. fol. entitled, “Gesta Dei per Francos;” though some propose to read ‘Diaboli,’ instead of ‘Dei.’—See Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. 53.

^b M. Paris.

as the Counts of Tripoli and Edessa. But the family of Bouillon ending in a female, the crown passed to a branch of the house of Anjou, whose heiress, Sibylla, marrying Guy de Lusignan, gave to her husband the throne of Jerusalem, and his title was universally acknowledged by all Christian princes at the time of Richard's accession to the English crown, 1189.^a

P.—This abstract and chronicle of the new kingdom, for near a century, it must be owned is very brief.

A.—Its history does not possess much interest, and till this period had no connexion with the affairs of England. In the year 1146, the power of Jerusalem being in a very languishing condition, application was made to the Pope and the monarchs of the west for their assistance. By the eloquence of Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, two great sovereigns, the Emperor Conrad the Third, and the King of France, Louis the Seventh, were roused to undertake the second crusade;^b in which those princes, after losing not less than two hundred thousand men, afforded little or no relief, and returned with diminished honour to Europe.

F.—The history of the crusades, separately considered, is not productive of much interest, each being a faint repetition of the first, deprived of its charm of novelty.

A.—The third crusade, in which King Richard acted so conspicuous a part, was distinguished not only by the exalted rank of the princes who personally engaged in the contest, but also by the celebrity of their opponent, Saladin, the soldan of Egypt, who in his conquest of the confined and barren district of Judæa was not impelled by motives of superstition alone: finding the settlement of the Christians in Palestine a great obstacle

^a Vinisauf.

^b Will. Tyriensis, lib. 16. M. Paris.

to his ambitious schemes, he bent his whole force to subdue that important territory, in which he was assisted by the dissensions which prevailed amongst the champions of the Cross, and the treachery of the Count of Tripoli, who commanded their armies.

P.—Was Saladin a descendant of the Arabian or Saracen caliphs?

A.—He had usurped the throne and title of Adhed, the last of the Fatimite caliphs, and Soldan of Egypt; but he was himself born in the country of the Curdes, a hilly region beyond the Tigris. His army consisted both of Turks and Arabs. But however Saladin might be endowed with the virtues of justice and valour, his liberality of principle has been far too much extolled: in fanaticism and disdain of science, he scarcely soared beyond the prejudices of his country. Saladin invading Palestine with a mighty force, utterly broke the power of the Christians, by gaining a complete victory at Tiberias, in which they lost the wood of the true cross,^a an event much regretted by the historians of that age; and after a feeble resistance, Jerusalem, with its king, Guy de Lusignan, fell into the hands of the Mahometan conqueror, 1187.

F.—Saladin gave liberty to Lusignan on condition that he should not take arms against his benefactor. For the credit of chivalry, it were to be wished that Lusignan had not broken his word.

A.—Of all these boasted conquests in the east, which had cost Christendom so many efforts to acquire, a few maritime towns only remained. Alarmed at this depressed state of affairs, Pope Clement the Third preached a new crusade with such effect, that the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa and the kings of France and

^a Vinisau.

England, Philip and Richard, immediately prepared to take the Cross in person.

F.—To the calamities of defeat in Syria were added the accidents of nature: an earthquake, to which evil that region in all ages seems to have been peculiarly exposed, engulfed or laid waste several cities. The Mahometans preached that God had punished the Christians, and the Christians that God had declared himself against the infidels.

A.—The Emperor was first ready, and he crossed the Hellespont with one hundred and fifty thousand men. This able politician and expert general had excited the most flattering hopes, which he most probably would have realized, but imprudently bathing in the Cydnus, he contracted a disorder, which terminated his enterprise and his life, June 10, 1190.^a

P.—He should have recollected the example of Alexander the Great, who, from bathing in the same cold stream, in that sultry climate, nearly suffered a similar catastrophe.

F.—From which he probably escaped only by his youth, but Frederic was in his sixty-ninth year.

A.—Of the vast armament of the Germans, a small force only arrived at the walls of Ptolemais, or Acre; which city now engaged the attention of Europe, as it was defended by a strong garrison of Moslems, and had been attacked for above two years by the united forces of all the Christians in Palestine, aided by the continual influx of adventurers.

P.—Acre is a name memorable too in modern warfare, by the repulse of Buonaparte, after his twelfth assault, by a portion of British sailors, under Sir Sydney Smith:

^a Bened. Abbas.

——— Bath'd in hostile blood,
 High on the breach, the dauntless seaman stood.
 Admiring Asia saw the unequal fight;
 Ev'n the pale crescent bless'd the Christians' might.^a

A.—The kings of England and France, with the fate of the former armies before their eyes, wisely chose to convey their forces to Palestine by sea, England at length perceiving the utility of a marine. But the fleets were unfortunately impelled by stress of weather to take shelter in Messina,^b where the two monarchs were detained the whole winter; and coming thus in perpetual contact, many sources of jealousy and irritation arose; these haughty princes being incapable of that mutual condescension which their situation rendered necessary. One cause of dispute was the refusal of Richard to espouse the princess Adelais, sister to the French king, to whom we have seen in the last reign that he was betrothed; but this ground of quarrel subsided on Richard's producing undoubted proofs of that lady's too great familiarity with his father, the late king Henry the Second.^c

F.—Certain it is that Richard made preparations for espousing Berengaria, daughter of Sanchez, king of Navarre, with whom he had become enamoured during his residence in Guienne. This young princess soon after arrived in Sicily with Queen Eleanor, and speedily departed with Richard to the isle of Cyprus, where the marriage was concluded.^d

A.—During his stay at Messina, Richard, though impelled more by military ardour than by superstition, consulted Joachim, abbot of Curacio, a famous prophet, on the meaning of certain passages in the Apocalypse, which the divine explained by declaring that

^a Heber, Palestine.

^b Hoveden.

^c Ibid.

^d Bened. Abbas.

Saladin was undoubtedly prefigured among the heads of the beast.^a On the arrival of Richard at Cyprus, he gave a decisive proof of his ardent temper: the English vessels being pillaged by Isaac Comnenus, prince of the island, Richard at once assaulted Limisso, a place of considerable strength, took it by storm, and threw the prince into prison, loaded with irons; who complaining of the little regard with which he was treated, Richard ordered fetters to be made of silver, with which distinction the captive was highly pleased.^b

P.—The rhetorical expression of golden chains is proverbial, but I had not supposed any one could be satisfied with fetters of a less valuable metal.

F.—Before the fleet of king Richard reached the port of Acre, it met a Saracen vessel of vast bulk, by some old writers called a Dromound, laden to the water's edge with stores and ammunition, various machines, and a large supply of Greek fire, for the use of the besieged Moslems: after having in vain been boarded, she was at length sunk by the English galleys, whose beaks were violently driven into her sides. The crew consisted of fifteen hundred men, of whom thirty-five only were saved,^c Richard threatening to crucify his sailors if they suffered the vessel to escape.

A.—At length the kings of France and England, with their respective forces, being arrived at the scene of action before the walls of Acre, sustained by their presence the drooping spirits of the besiegers. The emulation between these rival monarchs produced extraordinary scenes of valour. Richard, in particular, animated with a more precipitate courage, almost realized the extravagant actions of romance: in individual courage, he appears never to have been ex-

^a Hoveden.

^b Benedict. Abbas.

^c Vinisauf.

ceeded. The Moslem garrison, reduced to the last extremity, surrendered; stipulating the restoration of all Christian prisoners, and the delivery of the wood of the true cross, which had been lost in the battle of Tiberias.^a

F.—This great enterprize cost the Europeans no less than the lives of three hundred thousand men. It is said that its success was mainly attributable to a concealed Christian within the walls of the city, who gave to the besiegers from time to time the most essential information.

A.—Yet the acquisition of the town was productive of no permanent advantage. The French king, displeased with the ascendancy acquired by Richard, declared his resolution of returning home, on the plea of ill health; he left, however, ten thousand of his troops under the Duke of Burgundy. Richard, continuing his heroic career, purposed to besiege Ascalon; to prevent which, Saladin intercepted his passage with an army of three hundred thousand combatants: on this occasion was fought one of the greatest battles of the age, in which the English monarch displayed the talents of an able general, as well as those of a valiant soldier.^b Both the wings of the Christian army were broken, when Richard, who commanded in the centre, led on the main body and restored the battle with such success, that forty thousand Moslems were left on the field. Ascalon, with some other towns, soon after fell into the hands of the croises; and had it not been for the jealousy and quarrels between the French and English forces, Jerusalem, the great object of the enterprize, would probably have rewarded the exertions of Richard: the army had approached so near as

^a Vinisauf.

^b Ibid.

Bethany, when a soldier of the English companies, from a spot of elevated ground, cried out aloud to the king, "Come up hither, Sir, and I will show you Jerusalem;" but Richard, casting his shield before his face, exclaimed, "Ah! Lord God, suffer me not to view the holy city, since I am unable to deliver it out of the hands of the infidels."^a

F.—However, there is some doubt whether Richard did not relinquish the attack from a well-grounded apprehension of inability to succeed, the garrison being numerous, and the dreadful heats of a Syrian summer approaching.

A.—On the king's return to Acre, learning that Jaffa, or Joppa, was besieged by the Soldan, he immediately sailed with some merchant ships to its relief: sixty thousand Turks and Saracens retreated at his approach; but soon discovering the small force of the English monarch, they returned, and found him encamped before the gates of the town with only seventeen knights and three hundred archers: Richard boldly sustained their charge, and grasping his lance, rode furiously along the front of his enemies from the right wing to the left, without meeting an adversary who dared to encounter his career.^b

P.—Such amazing personal prowess seems to belong rather to the imaginary characters of an Amadis, or an Orlando Furioso, than to a real king of England.

A.—But all Richard's courage was unavailing, fatigue, disease, want, the anxious desire to return home, pointed out to the crusaders the necessity of securing their acquisitions, and accordingly a truce was concluded with Saladin for the term of three years, three months, three weeks, three days, and three hours.^c Its

^a Joinville.

^b Vinisau.

^c Radulph de Diceto.

conditions were that Acre, Joppa, and other sea-port towns of Palestine, should remain with the Christians, and that all persons should have liberty to visit Jerusalem unmolested, and return in peace.

F.—This latter condition could be no great sacrifice on the part of Saladin, as the Saracen Caliphs at all times permitted the Christian pilgrims to perform their devotions at the Holy Sepulchre.

A.—During the contest, many personal compliments passed between Saladin and Richard, which rival the politeness of modern generals. Richard being ill, was supplied by the Soldan with pears and peaches, of which he was very fond, and also a portion of snow, a prodigious luxury in the climate of Syria.^a Richard once wished for a personal interview, which Saladin declined, saying, with much delicacy, kings should not meet but to treat of peace: it is unbefitting that they should feast and converse, and then go out to battle.^b The Soldan was doubtless a person of eminent bravery, wisdom, and generosity: he died soon after the truce, at Damascus, bequeathing alms to be distributed amongst the poor, without distinction of Jew, Christian, or Mussulman; but as he was a sincere Mahometan, this liberality of feeling has been doubted. It is memorable, that a little before he expired, he ordered his winding-sheet to be carried as a standard through every street of the city, whilst a crier proclaimed, This is all that remains to the mighty Saladin, Conqueror of the East. Saladin died in his fifty-seventh year (1192).

P.—Such, then, was the unsatisfactory, if not inglorious, termination of the third crusade, which, at an

^a Bohadin, Vita Saladin.

^b Ibid.

immense cost, and after shedding rivers of blood, left the Holy City in the power of the Infidels: did the Christians ever afterward regain its possession?

A.—In what was called the sixth crusade, Jerusalem was restored to the Christians by the Soldan of Egypt, in a truce made with the emperor Frederic the Second (1228). They retained it only fifteen years, being finally deprived of it by the Korasmians, a wild Tartar brood, who fled from the arms of Zingis Khan,^a and from that time it has remained under the Mahometan yoke. The Holy City, from the religious associations connected with its history, must ever retain a powerful interest on the feelings of the Christian world; but desolate for many ages has been the dwelling of David. "Sleep, Jerusalem," says Fuller, in a tender apostrophe, "sleep in thy ruins, at this day of little beauty and less strength; famous only for what thou hast been."^b

P.—Did the crusades, thus pursued by so many successive generations, promote the general and gradual improvement of Europe?

A.—Of late years it is becoming the fashion to extol the benefits derived to Europe from the effect of the crusades, an opinion in which I cannot coincide; they seem rather to have checked than forwarded the progress of society. The lives and labour of so many millions buried in the East would surely have been more profitably employed at home.

P.—But the crusaders in their progress to the Holy Land must have imbibed, from the superior civilization of the countries through which they passed, many ideas of improvement.

A.—I much fear that armies on their march are

^a Joinville. M. Paris.

^b Holy War.

little susceptible of ideas of improvement; besides, the quiet leisure of the pilgrim was more adapted for reflection than the turbulent haste of the soldier. Morals certainly reaped no benefit; for of all the armies of any age or nation, none seem ever to have surpassed in profligacy and licentiousness those of the Holy Wars. The crusades fixed a stamp of permanency on popular superstition: they encouraged the utmost violence of fanaticism: war became a sacred duty; and, instead of prayer and acts of benevolence, the slaughter of human beings was inculcated as an expiation for offences.

F.—An incidental benefit arose from the diminution of the power of the nobles, as these petty tyrants were compelled, by their enormous expenses, to dissipate their overgrown estates.

A.—But at what a sacrifice was this advantage purchased. The expenditure of so much wealth in distant regions must necessarily impoverish the country from which it was extracted. Deeply as this inconvenience must have been felt, the obstinate perseverance of Europe for two centuries in this career of folly is singular. The first crusade may be accounted for by the impulse of enthusiasm, and the attraction of novelty; but the continuance of the Holy Wars cannot be explained by reason, nor justified by policy; for, excepting some slight apprehension from the Turkish power in the first crusade, no real danger menaced the safety of Europe during the whole period; the spirit of proselytism, which animated the Arabian prophet and his immediate successors, having long subsided. If the ninth and tenth centuries were ages of darkness, the twelfth and thirteenth were those of absurdity and folly.

F.—And yet men of powerful minds long afterward continued in the strange delusion of considering the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre as an acceptable service to the Deity: witness our monarch Henry the Fourth; who, though his motives might be partly political, yet they had the death-bed sanction of a religious feeling.

P.—The crusade having afforded a subject to the muse of Tasso, perhaps his delightful poetry is one cause why the Holy War yet retains its powerful and peculiar attraction.

A.—Yet the literature and intellectual aspect of Europe underwent no striking alteration, till other causes unconnected with the crusades were brought into action. To them we are certainly indebted for the noble inventions of Blue Mantle and Rouge Dragon, which at one time were more valued than the most useful arts, or the profoundest science.

P.—But if heraldry originated with the crusades, the knights cased up in close armour, requiring to be distinguished from each other by some device on their shield; how are we to account for previous coats of arms, such as Edward the Confessor's, for instance, who flourished half a century earlier.

A.—It does not appear, either by monuments, coins, or seals, that the English kings bore any arms, properly speaking, before Richard, whose great seal has the figure of a knight on horseback, bearing three lions on his shield;^a the coats of arms attributed to his predecessors seem to have been invented by the heralds afterwards, by way of distinction: to the Conqueror and his sons, they gave two lions; to king Stephen, a sagittary. Henry the Second, they say, resumed the

^a Speed, Chron. Sandford.

two lions, and on his marriage with the heiress of Guienne, added a third. The three lions continued to be the royal arms, till Edward the Third, pretending to the crown of France, thought proper to place the fleurs-de-lis in his first quarter, as if he had really been monarch of that kingdom, and the French arms absurdly continued to find a place in the English escutcheon till the treaty of Amiens, 1802, and were then abolished, it has been said, I know not how truly, at the suggestion of Buonaparte.

F.—The same authority on one occasion, having angrily declared his desire to drive the English leopards into the sea, it excited some surprise that he should mistake the animal borne in the national standard; but the French heralds terming the ‘lion passant gardant,’ a ‘lion-leopard,’ the allusion is explained.

A.—Coats of arms, which may be called silent names, were not completely established as hereditary till the reign of Henry the Third; there are still a few English families whose arms have descended with little alteration from that period, and which bear an allusion to their first owner having taken the cross, as those of Berkeley and Clinton. Had arms been in use before the era of the crusade, it is impossible that the combat between William the Conqueror and his son Robert, under the walls of the castle of Gerberoy, could have taken place, without each party knowing his adversary by the device on his shield.

P.—Or more visibly perhaps by the crest.

A.—William being a sovereign, would probably have been so distinguished; but crests were used only by monarchs and commanders of armies till the institution of the knights of the garter. Supporters were supposed to have arisen from the custom in tournaments

of the knight having his shield sustained by two of his servants dressed in some fantastic habit; but later, and I think better, authorities attribute them entirely to the fancy of the seal engravers, who embellished coats of arms according to their own fancy. The successive kings of England, from the first assumption of supporters by Edward the Third, varied them; till James the First having adopted the lion and the unicorn, they have since his days remained unchanged.

P.—Of what antiquity are mottos?

A.—They appear to have been sparingly used till the reign of Edward the Third, who, having given to his new institution of the garter a general motto, each of the knights assumed a particular motto of his own choosing. From that time their use became fashionable amongst the nobility; the sovereigns varied their mottos as well as their supporters. What may excite a smile, the two queens, Elizabeth and Anne, gave *semper eadem*—always the same; being a characteristic somewhat different from the *mutabile* as applied to the fair sex by Virgil.

P.—But we should recollect that that epithet was introduced by the poet, for the purpose of extenuating the perjury of a most perfidious swain.

A.—It must be owned that Æneas could not justify his conduct by the maxims of chivalry: but King Richard himself was no paragon of constancy in love; his enthusiasm for the relief of Palestine was indeed a passion permanent and unvarying. When he departed from the east, on his return to England, he exclaimed, "Most Holy Land, I commend thee to the care of the Almighty; may he grant me life to return and rescue thee from the yoke of the infidels."^a Being wrecked by

^a Vinisauf.

a storm near Aquileia, Richard assumed the habit of a pilgrim, suffering his hair and beard to grow. One of his attendants presented to the governor of Istria a valuable ruby, and solicited a passage through his province for Baldwin of Bethune and Hugh the Merchant, pilgrims returning from Jerusalem. "The present is that of a prince," said the magistrate; "it must be King Richard; tell him that he may come to me in peace." But the king, suspicious of danger, fled in the night. In three days he found himself near Vienna, attended only by one knight and a boy. The latter was sent to market, where his profuse display of money excited curiosity, which he eluded by giving out that his master was a rich merchant, whom he expected in a few days.^a

A.—Richard seemed to travel in the style of a modern incognito, whose assumed name is little or no disguise.

A.—The king was aware of his perilous situation, but unfortunately falling sick, he was unable to prosecute his journey. The boy was again sent to market, and beneath his girdle was discovered a pair of gloves, such as were usually worn by monarchs in that age: the lad, being seized and put to the torture, revealed his master's name and retreat. When the king saw the house surrounded by armed men, he drew his sword, and refused to yield, except to their chieftain, who was Leopold, Duke of Austria.^b

P.—But on what pretence could the King of England, and General of the Crusade, be made a captive?

A.—During the siege of Acre, the Austrian Duke having taken one of the enemy's towers, surmounted it with his banner; upon which assumption of superiority,

^a Hoveden. G. Neubrig. M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

Richard, as supreme commander, became indignant, and ordered the flag to be thrown into a ditch. This affront Leopold now found an opportunity to revenge, by selling Richard to the Emperor Henry the Sixth, who considered him as his enemy, for a large sum of money: and thus the hero, who had filled the world with his renown, was loaded with irons, thrown into a dungeon,^a and left exposed to the mercy of the meanest and most worthless of mankind.

F.—The conduct of another sovereign too plainly showed that the persecution of infidels had not taught the princes of Christendom justice to each other: as soon as the King of France had heard of Richard's imprisonment, he employed every means of force, intrigue, and negociation, against the dominions and person of his rival; and concluded a treaty with prince John, in which that paragon of baseness stipulated to deliver into Philip's hands a great part of Normandy, on condition that he should receive the French monarch's assistance to obtain the crown of England.^b

A.—The Emperor, to enhance the ransom of King Richard, treated him with the greatest rigour and indignity: the English monarch was even produced before a diet of the Empire at Worms, and charged with many grievous accusations,^c one of which was the assassination of Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat. This circumstance merits an explanation: on Richard's arrival at Cyprus, on his progress to the Holy Land, he was met by Lusignan, the expelled King of Jerusalem, whose wife Sybilla having recently died, the right to the crown devolved to her sister Isabel, married to this unfortunate Marquis. Richard at first espoused the cause of Lusignan, but, becoming sensible of the mischief of a disputed title,

^a Wykes Chron.

^b Hoveden, Rymer, vol. 1.

^c M. Paris. Hemingf.

put him in possession of Cyprus, on condition that he should resign his pretensions to the throne of Jerusalem.^a

F.—A possession more than equivalent to his loss; as the family of Lusignan retained the kingdom of Cyprus for three centuries.

A.—Conrade, in exercising the government of Tyre, gave some offence, and refused making satisfaction to a petty chief of Asia, called the Old Man of the Mountain, or prince of the Assassins, for that was the name of his people, whence the word has passed into most European languages: it was the custom of this ruffian, when he imagined himself to be injured, to despatch some of his subjects, who paid him the most implicit obedience, with secret orders to murder the aggressor:^b two of these fanatics had insinuated themselves in disguise among Conrade's guards, and wounded him mortally in the streets of Sidon.

P.—Surely the open and frank character of Richard, joined to his heroic actions, as well as the consideration that he had sacrificed his former enmity to the public good, should have shielded him against such an improbable accusation.

A.—So thought the German princes, and they exclaimed loudly against the conduct of the Emperor, who, moved at their expostulations, consented to conclude with Richard a treaty restoring him to liberty for the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand marks of silver. The released king narrowly escaping a fresh snare of imperial treachery, arrived in England, to the unbounded joy of the people,^c though they had been heavily taxed to make up his ransom. When the King of France first heard of Richard's liberation, he wrote

^a Vinisauf.

^b Heming. Brompton.

^c Hoveden.

to his confederate John, "Take care of yourself, the Devil is broke loose," (1194).^a

P.—This is the historical account of Richard's captivity and deliverance; but surely the popular belief is somewhat different.

F.—Richard is the last of the English monarchs whose actions are adorned or disfigured with fiction and fable. His impetuous bravery gained him the renown of courage, to a degree which has never been surpassed, and made him the hero of a hundred romances: one of these^b represents him to have been exposed in prison by the Duke of Austria, to the fury of a lion, when, having bound round his arm forty silk kerchiefs, which had been presented to him by an enamoured princess, he thrust his arm down the animal's throat, and plucked out his heart; whence he obtained the name of *Cœur de Lion*: but the adventure of Blondel de Nesle, who had shared his bounty, has a nearer resemblance to probability; that grateful minstrel having travelled over Europe to learn the fate of his beloved patron, having accidentally gained intelligence of a certain castle in Germany, where a person of distinction was confined, he repaired to the place, under a secret impulse that the prisoner was the king of England, and contrived an expedient for making the desired discovery, by singing a lyrical strain, which had been partly composed by himself and partly by Richard, who was a poet as well as a hero; when, to his unspeakable joy, on making a pause, he heard the song re-echoed and continued, which circumstance ultimately led to the release of the royal captive.

A.—I know not what degree of faith is to be given to the tale; but a very ancient ditty, purporting to be

^a Hoveden.

^b Ellis, *Specimens*, vol. 2. Warton, vol. 1.

the verses sung on this occasion, is preserved in an old French romance, called, *la tour tenebreuse*, and is said to have been extracted from an ancient chronicle written by King Richard; the language is that of Provence, a dialect older than the Romance tongue.^a

Blondel.

Domna vostra beutas,
Elas bellas, faisos
Els; bels oils amors
Els gens cors, ben taillats
Dous sien empresenats
De vostra amor que mi lia

Richard.

Si bel trop affansia
Ja de vos non portrai
Que major honorai
Sol en votre deman
Que sautra des beisan
To can de vos volria.

A paraphrase from a French version of this song is thus given by Dr. Burney.^b

Blondel.

Your beauty, lady fair,
None views without delight,
But still as cold as air,
No passion can excite;
Yet this I patient see,
While all are shunn'd like me.

Richard.

No nymph my heart can wound,
If favours she divide,
And smile on all around,
Unwilling to decide:
I'd rather hatred bear,
Than love with others share.

F. Another composition of Richard's yet remains; it is a Lament of his Captivity, written in the Romance

^a Fauchet, Recueil, vol. 2.

^b Hist. of Music, vol. 2.

language, first published by Lord Orford,^a from a MS. in the Laurentine library at Florence, and usually considered genuine; it contains six stanzas, of six lines each, in a complaining strain: the first and last of these I will recite.

Reis Rizard.

Ja nus hom pris non dira sa raison
Adrietament se com hom doleut non
Mas per conort pot il faire chanson
Pro adamis, mas povre son li don
Onta j avron, se por ma reezon
Soi fai dos yver pris.

Or sachent ben Enjevin e Torain
E il bachaliers qì son legier e sain
Qen gombre soie pris en autrui main
Il ma juvassen mas il no ve un grain
De belles armes sont era voit li plain
Per zo qe ge soi pris.

These Stanzas have been thus translated by Mr. Ellis.

King Richard.

If captive wight attempt the tuneful strain,
His voice belike full dolefully will sound,
Yet to the sad 'tis comfort to complain.
Friends have I store, and promises abound:
Shame on the niggards, since these winters twain,
Unransom'd, still I bear a tyrant's chain.

Sure did the youths of Anjon and Touraine,
Those lusty bachelors, those airy lords,
But know these walls their captive liege restrain,
They would full soon unsheath their loyal swords.
Alas! nor faith, nor valour, now remain,
Sighs are but wind, and I must bear my chain.

Richard in his youth was a Trobadour, and is said to have made "stanzas on the eyes of gentle ladies." Having lived much in the courts of the princes of Provence, he became enamoured of the poetry of their

^a Royal and Noble Authors.

country, then called "the gay science," and which was the standard of politeness in that age. But an old monk, Roger Hoveden, positively denies him the praise of a poet, asserting, that to raise himself a name, the King bought and begged verses and flattering rhymes, and drew over singers and jesters from France to chant panegyrics on him about the streets, that it might every where be said, the world contained nothing like him: but I think the Lament plainly refutes this statement. Richard, on his release, was received by his English subjects with extreme satisfaction, and he was crowned anew at Westminster. One of his first objects was to revenge himself on the King of France, against whom he declared war; but it was pursued on both sides with so little vigour, that no military event occurred of the least importance: prince John deserted the French party, and by the intercession of Queen Eleanor, was received into favour; the generous Richard saying, "I forgive him, and I hope that I shall as easily forget his injuries as he will my pardon."^a

F.—It was in this war that an ecclesiastic, the Bishop of Beauvais, was taken prisoner, and loaded with chains thrown into confinement; on which the Pope remonstrating, Richard sent to his holiness the coat of mail, besmeared with blood, which the martial prelate had worn in battle, with the interrogation which the sons of Jacob employed to their parent, "this have we found; know now, whether it be thy son's coat or no." The Pope had the candour to reply, "It is rather the coat of a son of Mars than of Christ; I will not interfere."^b

A.—Richard, who had braved so many dangers in the Holy Land, perished in an obscure contest with a

^a Camden, Remains.

^b M. Paris

vassal, nearly as ingloriously as the Swedish hero of more modern times, though the last circumstance does not exactly correspond.

His fall was destined to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand.

Vidomar, Viscomte of Limoges, had discovered an extraordinary treasure, which by an old tradition had been concealed in former days by the pro-consul Lucius:^a it consisted of the golden statues of a senator, his wife and children, sitting round a table, and habited in the Roman style. Part of these curiosities Vidomar sent to the king as a present, but Richard, as superior lord to the Viscomte, claimed the whole, and on his refusal to deliver them, besieged him in his castle of Chalus.^b Richard approaching the fortress in order to survey it, was wounded in the shoulder with an arrow, aimed by Bertrand de Gourdon, an archer. The king gave orders for the assault, and the whole of the garrison, though they had offered to surrender, were hanged, except Gourdon, who was reserved for a more cruel execution.^c

P.—Such horrid butchery is totally indefensible.

A.—Richard's wound was not in itself dangerous, but rendered so by the bungling surgery of that age: a gangrene ensued, and the king, sensible of his approaching death, sent for Gourdon into his presence: "Wretch," said he, "what have I done to you, that you should seek my life?" "What have you done to me?" replied the undaunted soldier: "my father and my two brothers fell by your hand, and myself you intended to put to death. I am now in your power: you may inflict on me the most severe torments, which I shall suffer with pleasure, rejoicing that I have rid the world

^a Dulaure, Limosin.

^b Hoveden.

^c Knyghton.

of such a tyrant." Richard, now humbled at the near view of mortality, ordered Gourdon to be set at liberty; but Marcadée, the leader of the Brabançons, a band of mercenary ruffians, seized the unhappy archer, flayed him alive, and then hanged him.^a

F.—Richard seemed to possess the good, as well as the bad qualities of an impetuous and vehement disposition.

A.—He was sincere and generous, though revengeful, haughty, and cruel; personal courage, no man, even in that romantic age, ever carried further; and it acquired him a renown which lasted for many ages, and from its being interwoven in various popular metrical compositions is not yet worn out.

F.—The terror of his name in Palestine was such that the Saracen women quieted their crying infants by threatening to give them to King Richard; nay, even the horses, it seems, had a notion of his prowess, for when they started, their riders were wont to exclaim, "You jades, do you think King Richard is in that bush?"^b

A.—This monarch died in the forty-second year of his age and the tenth of his reign, scarcely six months of which were passed in England. He constantly spoke the French tongue, and was never known to utter an English sentence but once, and that was not very complimentary to his subjects. The Prince of Cyprus opposing his pretensions to that island, Richard exclaimed, "O de'el, this is a fole Breton!" That the English king had some turn for humour we may gather from the story of a monk warning him to rid himself of his daughters, if he meant to secure the favour of God in the Holy Wars: "Why, hypocrite," said Richard,

^a Hoveden. Brompton.

^b Joinville.

"all the world knows I have no children." "Yea," replied the preacher, "you have three, and their names are pride, covetousness, and wantonness." "Is it so?" returned the king, "I bestow, then, the first upon the Knights Templars, the second upon the Benedictine Monks, and my prelates and clergy shall have the third."^a Richard was of tall stature^b and elegantly formed; his hair of a bright auburn; his eyes blue and fierce. He is extolled by Vinisauf, his companion in the crusade, for his flexible limbs, and the strength of his long arms.

P.—If he resembled the engraving by Vertue, his countenance must have been extremely prepossessing, fine, bold, and animated.

F.—I suspect that the portrait is rather the invention of the artist than a genuine copy, as suggested, from a statue of the monarch placed on his monument at Font Evraud. His tremendous battle-axe is thus celebrated by an old poet:

This King Richard, I understonde,
Ere he went out of Englonde,
Let make an axe for the nones,
Therewith to cleave the Saracens' bones.
The head, in sooth, was wrought full weele,
Thercon were twenty pound of steele.
And when he came in Cyprus lond,
This ilkon axe he took in hond.—WARTON, vol. i.

A.—Richard was much beloved by his personal friends. A remarkable instance of the self-devotion of one of his knights took place in Palestine. As the king one day, tired with hunting, lay asleep under a tree, near Joppa, with only six persons about him, he was roused by the approach of some Saracens: as they were but few in number, he mounted his horse

^a Brompton.

^b Vinisauf.

and rode after them, which they perceiving, drew him into an ambuscade: he defended himself with great bravery from their attack, but at length four of the attendants being killed, he was upon the point of being slain or taken, when William de Pratelle, one of his company, called out, "I am the King of England." This device gave Richard opportunity to ride off full speed, and the Saracens conducted their prisoner to Saladin,^a who, when the device was explained, commended his fidelity, and paid him much honour, setting his ransom so high as to procure ten emirs in exchange. Notwithstanding the king's popularity, his reign, from the taxes which were continually levied, must have been extremely oppressive; of this circumstance, advantage was taken by one Fitz-Osbert, a lawyer, called Longbeard, who by descanting on the abuses of the times, no doubt with a great deal of truth and justice, and affecting to be an advocate for the poor, had raised an alarming sedition. He was at length executed, to the extreme regret of the populace, who much venerated his memory.^b

F.—Fitz-Osbert seems to be the first instance of what we now call a radical, that appears in English history, and his example is somewhat ominous.

A.—During the long absence of the king, a dispute took place between his ministers—Longchamp, bishop of Ely, chancellor, a native of Normandy, and the Bishop of Durham, which ended in the expulsion of the former prelate, who was obliged to flee, concealed in a female habit. In this disguise he met with some rather comical adventures, which give a picture of the times: quitting Canterbury, he had above his dress a

^a Vinisauf.

^b Hoveden.

woman's gown of green colour, and sleeves of the same, with a hood upon his head, and holding under his arm a piece of linen with a draper's yard in his hand: thus attired, he sat tranquilly on a stone, with his merchandize on his knee, waiting quietly till a vessel should sail: some fishwomen passing, asked the price of his cloth, but the chancellor bishop, not understanding a word of English, answered nothing; the natives, though astonished at his silence, passed on notwithstanding. A fresh party arriving, examined the cloth, and made the same enquiry; but still the chancellor not answering, the women so diverted him with their interrogations that he burst into a laugh. These good people thinking him mad, took off his hood, and discovered the visage of a dark man just shaved, when calling for the assistance of some peasants, they threw him down; the unfortunate prelate exclaiming in French, I am Chancellor of the kingdom, Bishop of Ely, and Legate of the Holy See. After dragging him through the mud, the party finished their amusement by shutting the chancellor up in a cellar, from which he was at length released by authority.^a

P.—We may conclude that Longchamp was not a very eligible person for chancellor, if he could not speak a word of English.

A.—The domestic history of England, during the reign of Richard, may be considered as a blank; the personal history of the monarch, as a romance.

^a Hoveden.

DISSERTATION VI.

SECTION IV.

JOHN, - - - - - A.D. 1199.

A.—ALL the kings of England, from the Conquest to the accession of John, were men of distinguished ability; nor was this prince so destitute of talent as of principle. At the death of Richard, the possessions of that monarch, the most extensive in Europe which have ever been subjected to an English sovereign, should by right of blood have devolved to Arthur, now at the age of twelve years, the son of Geoffrey, the next elder brother of the deceased king; but in that age the doctrine of the representation of the elder branch being but imperfectly understood, and John having the advantage of mature years, as well as the last testament of Richard in his favour,^a was quietly admitted to take possession of the English throne, though several of the French provinces declared in favour of young Arthur.^b

F.—Female animosity, too, had a large share in the disposal of this mighty inheritance: the influence of Queen Eleanor was at this juncture great, and as she bore a mortal antipathy to Constance, the mother of Arthur, she had become apprehensive lest that princess, in the event of her son's ascending the throne, should necessarily assume that portion of power which she herself exercised. Constance, too, was of a disposition violent, indiscreet, and capricious; but the depriving her son of a kingdom was, indeed, a sufficient excuse for some exasperation of temper.

P.—The majesty of her sorrow, as described by

^a Hoveden.^b Ibid.

Shakspeare, has certainly given an interest to her memory, which its historic importance could never have conferred.

A.—Philip, the French king, pretending to espouse the cause of Arthur, declared war against John, but he betrayed so suspicious an attention to his own interests, that the young prince, who was then at Paris, escaped from his protection,^a and did homage to John for Brittany, and seemed to resign or postpone his claims upon the other French provinces as well as upon England. This impediment being removed, the monarchs declared peace, which was further cemented by the union of Lewis, eldest son of Philip, with Blanche of Castile,^b the niece of John; a marriage which hereafter gave rise to important pretensions.

P.—Here then is John, the usurper, firmly established on the English throne; his dangerous competitor quietly content with the inheritance of Britany; and the princes of Europe disposed to acknowledge the arrangement.

A.—The first act of King John was equally criminal and imprudent: divorcing, on pretence of consanguinity, his queen, Avisa, the heiress of the Earl of Gloucester, to whom he had been married ten years, he carried off and wedded Isabella, daughter of the Count of Angoulême, a young lady lately betrothed to the Count de la Marche, equally disregarding the menaces of the Pope and the resentment of the injured husband. This proceeding caused so much dissatisfaction, that a general combination of the Norman barons was formed against him, into which the King of France and the young Duke of Britany both entered, but which King John, with singular fortune, had

^a Hoveden.

^b Ibid.

the power of defeating, by making Arthur prisoner, who was surprized whilst besieging his grandmother, Eleanor, in the castle of Mirabeau^a (Aug. 1, 1203).

P.—This young prince, like his mother Constance, is remembered chiefly from the pity excited by the scenes of our great dramatist.

A.—The real circumstances of Arthur's fate differ but little from the representation of Shakspeare. In a conference with his nephew, John desired him to renounce his pretensions to the English crown, but the brave though imprudent youth, then at the age of sixteen, boldly maintained the justice of his claim, and even required the restoration of his lawful inheritance.^b From these symptoms of spirit, John, dreading the danger of future competition, proposed to William de la Bray, one of his servants, to despatch Arthur; but that person nobly replied, that he was a gentleman, not a hangman.^c The young prince was then sent to the castle of Falaise, the constable of which, Hubert de Burgh, feigning that he would execute the king's mandate, spread a report that Arthur had expired.

P.—The heated irons for the purpose of putting out the eyes of Arthur, and the passionate appeals to the pity of Hubert, we are then to set down to the imagination of the poet.

A.—Such particulars are mentioned by one chronicler only.^d The French historians^e relate that Arthur was removed to the castle of Rouen, to which place the king coming in a boat during the night-time, commanded his nephew to be brought before him; and whilst the young prince was on his knees, well aware of his danger, and begging for mercy, the inhuman

^a Mat. Westm. ^b M. Paris. ^c Willherm Brito. Philippid. lib. 6.

^d Radulph de Coggeshall, apud Bouquet, tom. 18. ^e Willherm Brito.

tyrant slew him with his own hand, and fastening a stone to the body, threw it into the Seine^a (1203). This was done in order to give some colour to a report which the king wished should be credited, that Arthur, attempting to escape from a window in the castle, had fallen into the river, and was drowned.

P.—Surely history presents but few instances of so base an assassination ; an inhumanity “ beyond the infinite and boundless reach of mercy.”

A.—It will console you to learn that, from that moment till the last hour of his life, King John continued to meet with almost an unbroken series of humiliations and reverses. The Bretons, enraged at the death of their prince, appealed to the French king as their liege lord, and demanded justice against the murderer. Philip received the application with pleasure, summoned John to stand a trial before him, and on his non-appearance, declared him guilty of felony and parricide, and adjudged him to have forfeited all the seignories and fiefs which he held in France.^b

P.—Such a pretension must evidently be sustained by a resort to arms.

A.—Philip first despatched a champion to assert his claims by the Norman mode of duel. On this occasion, John produced a renowned English knight, John de Courcy, who had conquered Ulster, but who, on some undefined suspicion of treason, had been imprisoned several years. When he was brought out, emaciated with confinement, John asked the brave veteran, if he would fight in his sovereign's cause. “ Not in thy cause,” exclaimed the indignant hero ; “ but for the kingdom's right, I will fight to my death.” The French champion, however, declined the combat, alarmed at the apparent

^a Annal. de Margan.

^b Hemingf.

prowess of his adversary. In a meeting subsequently held by the two monarchs, De Courcy was requested to exhibit before them a specimen of his vast strength, when striking a helmet, he not only cleft it at a single blow, but buried his sword so deeply in the post that supported it, that no one but himself could draw the weapon out.^a For this exploit, and his readiness to defend the kingdom, being desired to name his reward, he replied, that he had honours and estate sufficient, but he wished that his descendants should have the privilege of being covered in the presence of the king.^b

F.—The Barons of Kinsale, his posterity, retain the privilege to this day. It was exercised several times during the last century.

A.—When De Courcy, being afterward asked why he looked so fiercely as he gazed round before he made his stroke, he answered, that had he failed to cleave the helmet, he meant to have slain all the spectators, lest they should deride him.

P.—This was carrying the dread of ridicule to a singular extent.

A.—The general apathy of the English barons to the cause of their sovereign was so great that they refused him their assistance, and the French king at length overran the provinces of Normandy, Maine, Anjou, and Touraine. John, wasting his time in foolish amusements, vaunted that the French might go on, for he would retake in a day what it had cost them years to acquire; but he found by a cruel experience, that that portion of the vast inheritance which he received from his ancestors, was lost to his family for ever.^c

F.—No wonder that the French complimented their monarch, Philip, with the title of Augustus : Normandy

^a Hanmer's Chron.

^b Lodge, Peerage of Ireland.

^c M. Paris.

had been separated from the French monarchy for three centuries, and its reconquest could not fail to immortalize the prince who achieved so valuable a prize.

P.—How were the southern provinces of Guienne and Gascony preserved to the English dominion?

A.—Queen Eleanor, their hereditary sovereign, was yet alive when the quarrel broke out, and though at her death (1204) John succeeded in preference to the lawful heir, the sister of the unfortunate Arthur, yet the French king seems never to have directed his attention to the acquisition of these important provinces.

F.—That young princess, named Eleanor, called the Damsel of Britany, was scarcely less unfortunate than her brother, as, by the continued jealousy of the English government, she passed a life of more than forty years' captivity in Bristol castle.*

P.—Both the brother and sister, under the weight of royal birth, and legal pretensions to a crown, might exclaim—

So I were out of prison, and kept sheep,
I should be merry as the day is long.

A.—King John arrived in England, after the loss of his French provinces, overwhelmed with disgrace, if not with shame; the reproach of personal cowardice being added to his other misfortunes. At this crisis of his affairs, an accidental quarrel with the church, (and it was purely accidental, having no connexion with his dispute with France,) plunged him into the deepest abyss of humiliation. Other kings of England may have met with an equal share of suffering, but none with an equal portion of contempt.

F.—The reunion of the provinces with France,

* Trivet. Wykes.

however disgraceful to John as the lost patrimony of so many generations, was no evil to the English nation, as its kings since the Conquest had ever valued themselves upon their French descent, and directed their attention so much to the affairs of the continent, as to neglect the more important interests of their English territory.

A.—The see of Canterbury becoming vacant by the death of the primate, Hubert, (1205) some of the junior monks, without consulting their superiors, met clandestinely in the night, and chose Reginald, the sub-prior, for their archbishop; and having enjoined to him the strictest secrecy, despatched him to Rome, in order to solicit his confirmation from the Pope. Reginald's vanity, however, overcame his prudence; and long before he reached his destination, his loquacity had betrayed the secret.^a

F.—But for which indiscretion, the irregularity of the election, however great, would most probably have received the papal sanction.

A.—The canons of the cathedral, enraged at this proceeding of the monks, elected, at the suggestion of the king, John de Gray, bishop of Norwich, and the Pope's consent was alone wanting to his induction; but by one of those subtilties of the court of Rome, ever ready to turn all accidents to its advantage, this latter election was pronounced uncanonical, on the ground that it ought to have been postponed till the former had been set aside; and Innocent the Third, under the pretence of appeasing faction, commanded, or rather compelled the monks who had been sent to Rome for the purpose of sustaining the claim of John de Gray, to choose Cardinal Stephen Langton, an Englishman

^a M. Paris.

indeed, but long resident at Paris, of which university he was chancellor: thus introducing a precedent by which the see of Canterbury should ever after be held at the disposal of the court of Rome.^a

F.—But in return for such an accession of power, the Pope sent John four golden rings set with precious stones, endued, as he described them, with many moral and mystical properties, and which were to indemnify the king for the loss of one of the most valuable prerogatives of his crown.^b

A.—John, however, was not duped by such childish artifices: he fell into a violent rage, prohibited Langton from entering the kingdom, and with his usual ill-judged precipitancy, expelled the monks of Canterbury from their convent, who were now inclined to support the election of Langton.^c The Pope, aware of the unpopularity of the king, persisted in his measures, and threatened to lay the nation under an interdict, if John continued his refusal to receive the cardinal.

P.—The king had now evidently a just cause: why did not the nobility and the nation support his throne against such palpable encroachment?

A.—Though John himself was entirely exempt from any superstitious attachment to papal observances, and it really was a considerable merit in that age, yet his people did not follow with equal steps such an unembarrassed mode of thinking; and as he dared not assemble his nobility in the great council of the nation, we are unable to judge how far they would have united with their monarch in shaking off the yoke, and establishing a church independent of that of Rome.

F.—The interdict which the Pope at length denounced (1207) was well calculated to exhibit the galling

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid. Rymer, vol. 1.

^c M. Paris.

weight of papal authority. The altars were despoiled of their ornaments; the crosses and reliques were carefully concealed; the bells removed from the steeples; mass was celebrated by the priests with closed doors, and the laity excluded; marriages were performed in the churchyard;^a the dead were not interred in consecrated ground, and their obsequies were unattended with any hallowed ceremony; the whole kingdom appeared to deprecate the divine displeasure by every appearance of distress and contrition.

A.—This extraordinary state of alienation from Rome continued during five years. If in the reign of this prince any scope can be given for commendation, it may be bestowed here. John displayed considerable vigour of mind; he confiscated the estates of the clergy who obeyed the interdict; banished the prelates; confined the monks; and to render the clergy ridiculous, threw into prison all their concubines, for whose liberty he required a high price.^b

F.—But to soften the invidiousness of the appellation, it should be recollected that, in this age, the practice of concubinage by the clergy was considered only in the light of an irregular marriage, and it may be esteemed by the candid as an appeal from the tyranny of ecclesiastical institutions to the unerring laws of nature.

A.—Nor were the civil and military affairs of the kingdom conducted with less spirit, and in the only period of John's life with prosperity. He undertook enterprizes against Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, in all of which he succeeded; and had he secured the affections of his people, he would ultimately have triumphed over all the arts of Rome, but unfortunately

^a Knyghton.

^b M. Paris.

he exasperated and disgusted every class of his subjects by a continued course of licentiousness, rapacity, and tyranny. Innocent, now finding the interdict unavailing, proceeded to the next step of punishment by denouncing excommunication against John (1209), the effects of which soon appeared. Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, who held a considerable office in the Exchequer, being informed of the circumstance whilst sitting on the bench, left his chair and departed the court; for which dereliction of duty, the archdeacon was thrown into prison, and his head covered with a great leaden cope; when, suffering from the want of food and the weight of the metal, his life soon terminated.^a

P.—No one can blame the king in making Geoffrey an example, though the derisive cruelty of his punishment is not to be extenuated.

A.—In this state of excommunication, John became alarmed, as most of the nobility and prelates had deserted the kingdom, and the few remaining behind were suspected of having entered into a confederacy against him; he therefore solicited a conference with Cardinal Langton at Dover, and offered to acknowledge him as primate, and submit to the Pope; but the cardinal demanding full compensation for the clergy, whose losses he estimated at a most exorbitant rate, the king was utterly unable to comply, and the treaty fell to the ground.^b

F.—Here then follows that notable instance of papal effrontery, in which Innocent proceeded to absolve the subjects of John from their oath of allegiance; and the Pope actually issued the sentence of deposition against a monarch descended from a long

^a M. Paris.

^b Annal. Waverley.

line of ancestors, whose only offence against Rome was the exertion of one of the most valuable hereditary privileges of the English throne.

A.—The Pope pretended to justify his proceeding, on the hypocritical ground of his right to punish sin, particularly perjury; but only consider the degree of offence committed by Henry the Second in the murder of Becket, and the mere refusal of John to admit a primate irregularly obtruded, and we shall see the vast difference in the influence of personal character. But the Pope could not deprive John of his kingdom by mere anathemas, and he therefore fixed upon Philip, king of France,^a as his instrument, who, seduced by the prospect of present interest, had the folly to second these exorbitant pretensions of the court of Rome; and he immediately levied a vast army and a powerful fleet, for the purpose of taking possession of the vacant throne of England. In this extremity John also summoned his vassals at Dover, who assembled in numbers sufficient to defend him against all attacks from France.

F.—But here historians leave us in the dark, and it is not ascertained whether these forces could be relied on, many of the barons being even suspected of holding a secret correspondence with the enemy.^b

A.—From such a dangerous crisis, it became necessary that John should speedily extricate himself, and the means were afforded by the dexterity of Pandolf, the papal legate, who, in an interview with the king, represented the hopeless condition of his affairs in such glowing, but true colours, that the unfortunate monarch submitted to whatever terms Pandolf chose to prescribe.^c

F.—It was certainly hard that John, in his merito-

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

rious and even courageous opposition to the encroachments of Rome, should be deserted by so large a portion of his subjects ; for the terms, however ignominious, were perhaps, from the desperate nature of his circumstances, rendered unavoidable.

A.—Besides agreeing to the former conditions, hitherto rejected, John consented to make full restitution to the clergy ; but the great trial was yet to be added. Pandolf suggested that the only means to extricate himself from the dangerous claims of the French monarch, was to resign his kingdom to the church, and consent to hold his dominions as a fief of the Holy See, by the annual payment of a thousand marks. Accordingly this was done by a charter,^a a copy of which is still extant, wherein John agreed to hold his kingdom on these conditions ; and, in consequence, he did homage to the legate in the church of the Knights Templars, at Dover, May 13, 1213, with all the servile ceremonies which the feudal law required of vassals before their liege lord. John flung himself upon his knees ; lifted his joined hands and put them within those of Pandolf, who was seated on a throne ; swore fealty to the Pope ; and paid a part of the tribute. It is even said that the regalia were delivered to the legate, which he did not return for five days ; but if this circumstance be doubtful, it is certain that Pandolf, in this extreme triumph of sacerdotal power, trampled under his feet the money which had been offered as an earnest of the subjection of the kingdom ;^b which conduct, however offensive, no one present but the archbishop of Dublin dared even to notice.

P.—Strange that the King of England, who of all others had resisted the encroachments of the Holy See

^a Rymer, vol. 1.

^b M. Paris.

with the greatest pertinacity, should be thus compelled to bend lower to the same power than any of our monarchs before or since.

A.—Yet, after all, this transaction may be extenuated from somewhat of the excessive blame which has been cast upon it by the generality of historians. John was reduced to the last extremity; deserted by his subjects, threatened with a foreign invasion; and if he meant to retain his crown at all, there was surely as little ignominy in owing it to the protection of the Pope as to the French king; and in that age the idea of vassalage did not carry with it quite the same offence as in the present times: nor should it be forgotten, that even Henry the Second, in soliciting the aid of the Pope against his rebellious children, made the strange acknowledgment that he held his kingdom from the Pontiff as his superior lord.^a

P.—But the proceeding is a conclusive proof how entirely King John must have been both hated and despised by his subjects, since they could tamely witness such a disgraceful ceremony.

A.—In the lowest reverse of fortune, John continued his undiminished inclination to tyrannize. Peter of Pomfret, a sort of hermit, having prophesied that before the end of the year the king would lose his crown, was tied to a horse's tail, and dragged through the street at Warham, where he was hanged on a gibbet,^b together with his son, though the man pleaded that his prediction was accomplished; which truth, indeed, was supposed to aggravate his offence.

P.—But how did the King of France, who had been at the expense of raising a fleet and army, obtain a recompense?

^a Rymer, vol. 1.

^b M. Paris.

A.—His case exhibited one of the most delightful examples of *duperie* which has ever been played off by the court of Rome; and as the cause which Philip had espoused was equally impolitic as unjust, he could not but feel most poignantly the ridicule to which he was exposed. Pandolf, returning from England, congratulated Philip on the success of his pious enterprize, and informed him that, as John had returned to his obedience to the Holy See, and even consented to hold his dominions as a fief of the church, no Christian prince could attack him without the most flagrant impiety;^a and notwithstanding Philip's rage at finding himself so completely outwitted, he became totally unable to proceed. The Earl of Salisbury, with the English, recovering their spirit, destroyed the larger part of the French fleet;^b and the Pope having gradually recalled the several anathemas pronounced against John, and remitted a large part of the claims of the clergy, England resumed a state of tolerable repose, the two kings, Philip and John, concluding a truce for five years (1214).^c

F.—The transactions of John's reign naturally form themselves into three divisions, which are easily remembered: those relating to the loss of the French provinces, originally emanating from the base treatment of young Arthur; those relating to the king's quarrel with Rome, respecting the appointment to the see of Canterbury; and lastly, those which arose in his subsequent dispute with his barons, and which ultimately produced the great charter.

A.—The former charters had been so much neglected, that their obligations were esteemed by the king as nugatory; and it was with difficulty that a single copy

^a Trivet.^b M. Paris.^c M. Paris, Chron. Mailros.

of that of Henry the First could be procured, on which the barons,^a now universally discontented with the resignation of the kingdom to the Pope, as well as with other grievances, might ground their pretensions.

F.—Yet it has been suspected that those haughty nobles did not resist the encroachments of Rome, in the expectation that by humiliating their prince they might more safely combine to depress his power.

A.—This view of the matter is scarcely feasible, as without the concurrence of the clergy, the nobles would have combined to establish Magna Charta in vain; yet we may conceive the oppression of John's government to have been atrocious, since the new archbishop, Stephen Langton, though placed in his see by the submission of the king to Rome, yet readily joined, if indeed he were not the first to propose, the confederation.

F.—Langton seems a remarkable instance of a Romish ecclesiastic preferring the interests of his country to the claims of the church. He is said to have been an accomplished scholar and theologian, and to have divided the Bible into chapters.

A.—The barons first assembled privately in London (1214), and afterwards at St. Edmondsbury. It was there agreed that, at the festival of Christmas, they should prefer their petition to the king, and insist on their demands, if rejected, by force of arms.^b

F.—That was surely going as far as the most zealous Whig of more modern times would have thought of proceeding.

A.—The barons appearing on the appointed time, the king entreated delay till Easter, during which interval he appealed to the Pope for protection. At length the barons assembling with a force of two thousand

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

knights, and an immense number of retainers, he desired to know the nature of their demands. When the schedule was produced, John broke into a violent passion, asking, "Why do not the barons demand my kingdom?"^a declaring that he would never grant his subjects such liberties as would make himself a slave. Upon this the barons immediately proceeded to levy war: they besieged Northampton, entered Bedford, and were received without opposition in London.^b The king found himself utterly deserted; and at length submitted to hold a conference, which took place, June 15, 1215, at Runyng, or Runnemedes, in Surrey.

F.—This celebrated spot is common land, consisting of one hundred and sixty acres, on the banks of the Thames, in the parish of Egham. Its name is said by Mathew of Westminster to be derived from a Saxon word signifying council, as several councils had been formerly held there; but it is much more probable, that the name means nothing more than the running meadow, horse races having there taken place from time immemorial.

P.—Is it not extraordinary that Shakspeare in dramatizing the "Life and Death of King John," should never have alluded in the most distant manner to the remarkable transaction of granting Magna Charta.

F.—Shakspeare's play is altogether a strange historical jumble. It was probably not produced till after the accession of James the First; and the bard well knew that his royal patron was no friend to charters enlarging the privileges of the subject.

A.—King John signed Magna Charta with a suspicious facility, his manner indicating the insincerity of a man acting by compulsion, and intending to break

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

through its provisions at the first opportunity which offered.^a

P.—Of what nature were those provisions, which for so many ages have been considered as the key-stone of English liberty?

A.—The Great Charter is not very methodically arranged; and not being divided formally into chapters, various authors have differently numbered its clauses. The larger part of its provisions relate to the relief or the removal of feudal burthens; but in order to secure the concurrence of the people, the barons, in thus rendering themselves more independent of the crown, in itself perhaps an evil, were compelled to grant the same immunities to their vassals which they had extorted from the sovereign for themselves. Other articles relate to the safety and freedom of merchants, permitting them to leave the kingdom and return at pleasure. The ancient liberties and customs were secured to London, and to other cities and boroughs. Several minor legal and other abuses were regulated, which one is surprised to learn could ever have been suffered any where to prevail. But the great clause deserving to be written in letters of gold, declares that no freeman shall be apprehended or imprisoned, dis-seised or outlawed, except by the law of the land. Another clause of nearly equal importance, is that which declares, that the king will to no man sell, deny, or delay right and justice.

F.—Such then is Magna Charta, which has been supposed by most historians to be equivalent to a restoration of the much desired Saxon laws of Edward the Confessor: but unless the essence of his code be contained in the two important clauses now quoted, I

^a M. Paris.

can scarcely think the opinion well founded, as, judging from the specimen of Saxon laws^a yet extant, there is nothing in them to cause a national regret at their oblivion, and their spirit is totally different from the style and manner of Magna Charta, which is evidently founded on a feudal basis.

A.—Though many of its provisions expired with the feudal system, yet this celebrated instrument remained a landmark, which justified resistance to the encroachments of tyranny, and in future struggles between the people and their sovereign pointed out a determinate object of contention. How essential Magna Charta was esteemed to the interests of the English nation, we may judge from its having been renewed no less than thirty-five times in the course of two centuries.

P.—Is the authentic original of this invaluable record yet remaining in existence?

F.—When the consent of the king was to be obtained, certain articles or heads of agreement were drawn up, which were afterwards to be methodized in a more regular form; to these *capitula*, or heads, the king set his seal at Runnemedede. This precious document is yet in being, in admirable preservation. It was once possessed by Archbishop Laud: it afterwards became the property of Bishop Burnet; and from the executors of his son, it came to the British Museum, by the presentation of Earl Stanhope (1769).^b It is a parchment ten inches and three quarters broad, and twenty-one inches and a half long: the great seal of King John, little injured by time, of whitish yellow wax, is appended to it by a label. But the Great Charter, properly so called, consists of these articles reduced to form; and so large a number of these origi-

^a Wilkins, *passim*.

^b Statutes of the Realm, *Introduc.*

nals was made that one was deposited in every county, or at least in every diocese in the kingdom; two of these originals are extant in Sir Robert Cotton's collection, and another more perfect in Lincoln cathedral;^a they are some inches wider than the former parchment, and not quite so long. One of these charters and the *capitula* are exhibited in an anti-room at the British Museum.

A.—But however valuable we esteem this document, King John considered Magna Charta as a mere chain of parchment, by which he determined not to be bound, and accordingly applied to Rome for absolution from his oath.^b The Pope, pretending to consider himself as feudal lord of the kingdom, was incensed at the temerity of the barons, who had dared without his consent to impose conditions on their prince, and he immediately excommunicated by name twenty-five distinguished nobles, who had been appointed conservators of the public liberty.

F.—The barons appear to have neglected those prudent precautions which might secure them against the well-known perfidy of their king.

A.—John artfully introduced an army of Brabancōns,^c or natives of Brabant, a sort of mercenary troops, who let themselves to any prince for pay, and with these he ravaged and devastated the kingdom from one end to the other. In this desperate extremity, the barons applied to the king of France, offering the English crown to his son, afterwards Lewis the Eighth, on condition of protecting them from the violence of John.

F.—Though a sense of the common rights of mankind, which are alone indefeasible, might have justified the barons in the deposition of their sovereign, says

^a Statutes of the Realm, Introduc.

^b M. Paris.

^c Ibid.

the philosophic Hume, and it is rather an extraordinary admission in a Tory historian, yet they preferred the subterfuge of asserting that John was incapacitated from succeeding to the crown by an attainder passed in the former reign, and that he had virtually deposed himself by doing homage to the Pope; and as Blanche of Castile, the wife of Lewis, was the granddaughter of Henry the Second, they pretended to adhere to the order of succession in choosing the French prince.^a

A.—Whether the barons acted wisely in not boldly avowing their motives may be doubtful, but their remedy was at least as dangerous as the disease. Prince Lewis landed with an army of seven thousand men in the isle of Thanet, and was immediately joined by a large part of the nobility; and thus the miseries of a civil war were united with the prospect of enduring a foreign yoke; but from this state of affairs the nation was at length happily relieved. The French prince, having subdued the greater part of the kingdom, was piqued at the resistance of Dover castle, and he swore never to raise the siege till he had taken that fortress, and hanged all the garrison;^b an oath which he was never able to perform, and which lost him the crown of England.

F.—Dissensions too had begun to arise between the French and English nobility, which were increased by a report, very generally believed, that the Viscount de Melun, on his death-bed, had confessed that Lewis intended to confiscate the estates of the English barons, as traitors to their prince, and bestow them on his French courtiers.^c

A.—King John, breaking into Norfolk and Suffolk, committed the most dreadful devastations on the estates

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

of his rebellious barons in those counties ; but marching from Lynn into Lincolnshire, over the sands, at an improper time, the rear of his army was overtaken by the flowing tide, and he lost in the inundation his entire baggage, containing his treasure and regalia.^a The vexation arising from this disaster threw him into a fever, and reaching Newark, he died in the castle of that town, in the forty-ninth year of his age, October 19, 1216.^b

P.—The story then of his having been poisoned by a monk, at Swinestead Abbey, appears to have been without foundation, and adopted by Shakspeare for the sole purpose of exhibiting a scene of terrific energy.

F.—All the writers who lived within the reach of sixty years of the death of John,^c attribute that event to grief, anxiety, and fever, which was heightened by eating voraciously of peaches, and drinking new cider. About that time, the chroniclers begin to surmise that it was caused by poison. A later writer^d first assigns as the cause, that John being desirous of seducing a fair prioress, sister of the abbot, was presented by him with a dish of poisoned pears ; at this, the gems in the king's rings beginning to sweat, John, by way of precaution, desired the father to partake of the fruit, and the wily monk eating three which had not been contaminated, so escaped. In another half century,^e the story had become improved, by introducing a monk to whom the king declared, that as the cheapness of bread made the people rebellious, he would advance the loaf from a penny to a shilling ; whereupon the monk took such indignation that he put the poison of a toad into a cup of ale, as fame reports, and drank to

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Dr. Pegge, Archæol. vol. 4.

^d Hemingford.

^e Knyghton.

the king, who thus encouraged to pledge him, the consequences to both were speedily fatal.

A.—John stands at the bottom of the list of English monarchs, and seems almost to have realized the description of the Roman satirist, *monstrum nullâ virtute redemptum*; an unnatural son, an unkind brother, a cruel uncle, a jealous and inconstant husband; dissembling, cowardly, and cruel; without faith, honour, or honesty; paying no regard to law, justice, or mercy; yet, perhaps, it was only by such a combination of evil qualities that his people were enabled to acquire an enlargement of their liberties, which they would not have asked from a better, nor obtained from an abler prince.

F.—It is not my intention to dispute the truth of the picture; but it should be recollected that the transactions of this reign must be regarded by the English nation with unavoidable prejudice. The character too of princes who have had disputes with Rome, requires to be regarded with peculiar caution; as John constantly treated the monks, who were the sole historians, with ridicule, he became the object of their aversion; his very harmless pleasantry upon their usual corpulency, when once killing a fat stag, he observed, “how plump and well fed is this animal, and yet I dare swear that it never heard mass,”^a has been construed by them into an enormous impiety. The same authority has also related an anecdote, by many persons deemed incredible, that John sent an embassy to the Emperor of Morocco, offering to become a Mahometan, on condition that the Miramoulin, for so he was at this time called, would protect his kingdom.

A.—The story is too extraordinary not to awaken suspicion, but too well attested not to have some foun-

^a M. Paris.

dation. Mathew Paris gives the names of the ambassadors, as well as that of the priest, Robert of London, who accompanied them. He describes the manner of their audience, and their conversation with the sable king; who despised their master as a renegade, and dismissed the mission with contempt. As some presumption of the truth of the story, it is certain that King John was accustomed to break out into the most profane and irreligious expressions. "Never," said he, a short time after signing the grand charter, "have I prospered since I have been on good terms with God and the Pope;"^a and on the same occasion, he cursed and swore by God's teeth, his usual oath, and exhibited all the freaks of a madman.^b

F.—His humour was in a better taste when, to a courtier who would have persuaded him to deface a splendid tomb erected over one of his rebellious barons, he replied, "No; but I would to heaven that all my enemies were as honourably buried."^c

A.—The person of this monarch is not described by the ancient historians. The head of King John, engraved by Vertue, is taken from the effigy on his tomb at Worcester, and much resembles the figure on his broad seal:^d the countenance, without well knowing what fault to find with it, is far from agreeable.

F.—The Queen Isabella, wishing to punish the infidelities of her husband, imitated his conduct, but not with impunity; for John discovering one of her gallants, seized him, and had him hanged over her bed.^e

A.—In his grants, this prince first made use of the term 'nos,' or 'we,' the former kings using 'ego.' Though the whole reign of John was a tissue of mortifications to

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

^d Grainger, vol. 1.

^e M. Paris.

the monarch, yet the improvement of the kingdom made gradual, if nearly imperceptible, advances. The prosperity of the towns considerably increased: to King John, London is indebted for the power of choosing its mayor and sheriffs annually (1210), and for other civic privileges: it had been heretofore governed by two bailiffs. The first magistrate who bore the title of mayor was Henry Fitz Alwyn,^a and he continued in his mayoralty five years. London bridge, new built with stone, after thirty-three years' labour, was finished in the year 1209:^b it contained twenty arches, and was ornamented with a chapel and gates: the strange erection of houses upon the bridge is of somewhat a later date; they continued for four centuries, and were ultimately removed in the year 1758.

P.—The old opinion that London bridge was built upon woolpacks, we suppose, means that the cost was defrayed by a tax upon that commodity.

F.—Even that particular is not ascertained; but the fabric was certainly erected at the charge of the public. The ancient prints of the bridge, with its wooden houses, and water-works, and the roaring torrent, exhibit a curious spectacle. The odd picturesque sterlings were not an original part of the structure, but added to protect the piers. When the houses were taken down, and various plans were presented for improving the avenues, some one modestly proposed to remove the monument^c about fifty yards from its present site.

A.—Of these antique *vestigia* not a particle will speedily be found. King John established guilds and fraternities in various cities for the protection of trade; and if his government could be considered apart from

^a Fabyan's Chron.

^b Stow, Survey.

^c Gent. Magazine, vol. 30.

his personal qualities, it must be admitted that England has seen worse; and perhaps, says Fuller, he might have been esteemed by the monks more pious had he been more prosperous.

P.—During the reign of Henry the Second, and his two sons Richard and John, did the arts and sciences, the usual concomitants of riches, keep equal pace with the increased wealth of the kingdom?

A.—The study of letters was cultivated by some few scholars amongst the clergy, and indeed with singular success; but the age itself was involved in darkness and ignorance: the minute quibbling of the peripatetic school infested every department of science, and prevented the just development and progress of the understanding; geometry and mathematics were neglected to make way for investigations concerning the essence of universals,^a and the substantial form of sounds. Of the value of the logic in vogue, we may judge from the famous proposition—"When a hog is carried to market, tied about his neck with a rope, which is held at the other end by a man, whether the hog is carried to market by the rope or by the man?" This difficulty the logicians declared could not be solved, the arguments on both sides being so perfectly equal; yet there were men who could discern the futility of such enquiries, as the relater^b declares, that the logical questions then agitated were of no use in the church or in the state, in the cloister or the court, in peace or war, at home or abroad, or any where but in the schools.

F.—With the extension of trade the manual arts and agriculture received improvement; new lands were inclosed and drained, the monks often working in rural

^a Pet. Blcsen. Epist. 101.

^b Johan. Sarisb. Metalog. lib. 1, c. 3.

occupations with their own hands. Even so early as the days of King Stephen, William of Malmesbury gives a delightful picture of the fertility of the vale of Gloucester, both in corn and fruits: its vineyards producing a wine little inferior to that of France.^a

A.—Wool was for several centuries the most valuable article of English export. The manufactures of spinning and dressing, both that commodity and flax, were known to the Anglo-Saxons, but had so much increased in importance, that a regulation was made by Richard the First respecting their fabrication and sale.

F.—One of its provisions shows the early inclination of the government to intermeddle with the details of trade: “No merchant shall stretch before his shop or booth a red or black cloth, or any other thing by which the sight of buyers is frequently deceived in the choice of good cloth.”^b

A.—We have already seen that, by the fortunate introduction of the pointed arch, a more elegant style of building began to prevail, particularly in ecclesiastical structures. The art of painting on glass^c was introduced into England in the reign of John. Illuminating, (whence our word limning) a sort of miniature painting, used chiefly in ornamenting bibles and missals, was both patronized and practised by the clergy.^d The professors of this art were in possession of a great variety of colouring materials, and many of their specimens remain, highly curious and beautiful. The clergy too were great encouragers of music, as it drew the people to church and rendered the service more agreeable to themselves: that it was cultivated with much success, we have the following unconscious testimony

^a De Gestis. Pontif. lib. 4.

^c Walpole, Anecdotes of Painting.

^b Hoveden.

^d Brompton.

of an ecclesiastic, John of Salisbury,^a who is severely censuring the departure from the ancient style: "When," says he, "you hear the soft and sweet modulation of the choristers; some leading, others following; some singing high, others low; some falling in, others replying; you imagine that you hear a concert of syrens, not of men, and admire the flexibility of their voices, which cannot be equalled by the nightingale, the *parrot*, or any other creature, if there be any other, more musical."

P.—The humdrum style has always had its partisans in the church, in more departments than one. But was this pleasing concert accompanied by an organ?

A.—Only in cathedrals, or some few conventual churches. The history of the introduction of that divine instrument into public worship, throughout the Christian world, is exceedingly obscure. The organ was of Greek invention, and is supposed to have been known in England so early as the tenth century, and to have been improved by St. Dunstan,^b who was an eminent musician. In secular music, the harp was the universal favourite, and the minstrels chanted their productions to its accompaniment in the halls and banquets of the great.^c Wales and Ireland were particularly celebrated for the skill and dexterity of their harpers.^d

P.—The transition from music to poetry follows of course. Did the poets of the last half century improve in their compositions?

A.—The poets, who wrote in the Gallo-Norman dialect, continued their strains of narrative romance. Robert Wace, a native of Jersey, and chaplain to

^a Policrat. lib. 1, c. 6.

^c M. Paris.

^b Stubbs de Pontif. Ebor.

^d Girald. Cambren.

Henry the Second, was the author of various pieces of this description ; the most known of which, *Brut d'Angleterre*, was early translated by the English poet Layamon: it is a French metrical version of the history of Britain, from the times of the imaginary Brute to Cadwallader. Another of Wace's pieces was *Roman du Rou, or Rollo*; they are of an overwhelming tediousness. One of the earliest specimens of the English language, yet fluctuating between the Saxon, spoken by the bulk of the community, and the Norman tongue, used by the nobility, is a satire upon the monastic profession: it was written before the reign of Henry the Second, and appeared in Saxon characters.^a The unknown author supposes an imaginary paradise to exist in some quarter of the globe, which he calls Cokagne, from *Coquina*, whence probably we have cockney, from superior skill in the art of cookery. In this paradise he places two convents, constructed of various kinds of delicious and costly viands:

Ther is a wel fair abbei,
Of white monkes and of grei;
Ther beth boures and halles,
All of pasteus beth the walles;
Of fleis, of fisse, and a rich met,
The likefullest that man may et.

The author then makes a transition to a convent of nuns:

An other abbai is ther bi
For soth a gret nunnerie.
Up a river of sweet milk,
Where is plente grete of silk.
When the summeris dai is hote,
The young nunnes taketh a bote,
And doth ham forth in that river,
Both with oris and with stere.

The subject is then pursued with much pleasantry,

^a Hickes' Thesaur. vol. 2.

sharply satirizing the inhabitants of both sexes who tenanted these luxurious abodes of ease and indulgence: the picture is too free for modern delicacy, and reminds us extremely of the manner of La Fontaine. Mr. Warton supposes the poem to be of French origin. Its language is surprisingly intelligible, and appears as modern as the English of three centuries later. In point of taste, the composition is superior to any thing before the days of Chaucer.

F.—But all authors who aspired to fame chose the Latin tongue as the medium of their thoughts; and certainly Latin poetry was cultivated by the monks and clergy of the twelfth century, with a degree of success not suspected by those unacquainted with their writings.

P.—Some of their names must then be familiar with the learned.

A.—John Hanvill, Alexander Necham, and Joseph Iscanus, or Joseph of Exeter, are poets whose works possess considerable merit, though it must be acknowledged that they are little read or known. Iscanus wrote an epic poem founded on the exploits of Richard the First, called *Antiocheis*, a small fragment of which, in praise of King Arthur, alone remains,^a but of so much excellence as to make us regret the loss of the rest. He also wrote an epic poem, in six books, on the Trojan war, adapted from the apocryphal Latin history of Dares Phrygius, in a versification remarkably sweet and flowing.

P.—The subject is surely ill-chosen, as who can endure to hear “the tale of Troy divine” from other poets than Homer and Virgil.

A.—The productions of Walter Mapes, the facetious chaplain of Henry the Second, and justly called

^a Camden, Remains.

the Anacreon of his age, are, as may be supposed, of somewhat a different character. His celebrated drinking ode, in Leonine verse, has a bacchanalian joyousness and defiance about it which have seldom been surpassed. It begins thus—

Mibi est propositum in taberna mori,
 Vinum et appositum morientis ori,
 Ut dicant cum venerint Angelorum chori,
 Deus sit propitius huic potatori.

Which, unless the author had been an ecclesiastic, one would hardly venture to translate—

Well, let me jovial in a tavern die,
 And bring to my expiring lips the bowl,
 That choirs of angels, when they come, may cry
 Heaven be propitious to the toper's soul.

But besides poets, there flourished in this age several authors whose works may be reckoned among the agreeable class of miscellanies. Petrus Blesensis, or Peter of Blois, was invited by Henry the Second to England, and employed as secretary by that monarch: his printed works consist of one hundred and thirty-four letters, sixty-five sermons, and seventeen tracts on different subjects. The following description of the commencement of a royal progress is not unamusing: "When the king sets out in the morning," says he, "you see multitudes of people running up and down as if they were distracted; horses rushing against horses, carriages overturning carriages, players, ladies of pleasure, gamesters, cooks, confectioners, mimics, dancers, barbers, pimps, and parasites, making so much noise, that you would imagine, in this intolerable, tumultuous jumble of horse and foot, that the great abyss had opened, and that hell had poured out all its inhabitants."^a

^a Epist. 14.

John of Salisbury, born at Old Sarum, the friend of Becket, aspired even to a more multifarious literature; his work—*Policraticus, sive de Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum*—"On the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footsteps of Philosophers," exhibits good sense, genius, and erudition. It could be wished that the author had abounded less with allusions to the ancients, the common fault of the writers of the middle ages, and given a larger portion of his book to the more interesting scene before him. It must be admitted that

..... most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court —

as the following description of the nobility will show: "They consume their time," he says, "in the constant practice of hawking and hunting: they pursue wild beasts with greater fury than they do the enemies of their country; they thus lose the best part of their humanity, and become almost as great monsters and savages as the animals which they hunt. Husbandmen, with their harmless herds and flocks, are driven from their well-cultivated fields and pastures, that wild beasts may range in them at large. If one of these great and merciless hunters pass by your habitation, bring out quickly all the refreshment you have in your house, or that you can buy or borrow from your neighbour, that you may not be involved in ruin, or even accused of treason."^a

P.—But were the great the only subject of his satire?

A.—Other classes came in for their share. Hear what he says of the physicians of this period: "The professors of the theory of medicine are very communicative; they will tell you all they know, and perhaps

^a *Policrat. lib. 1, c. 4.*

out of their great kindness a little more. When I hear them harangue, I am charmed; I think them not inferior to Mercury or Esculapius, and almost persuade myself that they can raise the dead: one thing only makes me hesitate, their theories are as directly opposite as light and darkness, and two contradictory propositions cannot both be true. Of the practical physicians I must say nothing amiss, as it pleaseth God, for the punishment of my sins, to suffer me to fall too frequently into their hands; and, that I may not be treated roughly in my next illness, I dare hardly allow myself to think in secret what others speak aloud."^a In another work, however, he picks up courage afterwards, and tells his mind with more freedom: "The physicians speak aphorisms on every subject, and make their hearers stare at their long, unknown, and high-sounding words. The good people believe they can do any thing, because they pretend to all things. They have two maxims which they never violate: never mind the poor, and never refuse money from the rich."^b

F.—The professors of physic were chiefly monks, and both these classes of men have always been peculiarly exposed to the shafts of satire.

A.—The works of Giraldus Cambrensis, or Girald Barry, are perhaps more known than those of any writer of this period. This ecclesiastic was born of a noble family near Pembroke (1146), and was a person of uncommon activity, united with considerable learning and talents: his vanity was excessive, but highly amusing: he wrote a topography and a history of Ireland, which country he visited, and they contain, mixed with much absurdity, considerable information respecting that unfortunate island. Of Girald Barry's childish

^a Policrat. lib. 2, c. 29.

^b Metalog. lib. 1, c. 4.

simplicity, his story of St. Kewen may suffice as an example: "Once," says he, "as that saint was standing at his window in an attitude of prayer, a swallow laid an egg in his extended hand, and such were his patience and good nature, that he neither drew in nor shut his hand, till the bird had built her nest, laid all her eggs, and hatched her young."^a

P.—If such was the folly of the clergy, we have no reason to wonder at the credulity of the people.

A.—Giraldus also wrote the Itinerary of Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, through Wales, for the purpose of raising volunteers for a crusade, which undertaking was eminently successful, though both the primate and Giraldus, who accompanied him, preached to the people in Latin, not a word of which they could understand. This work also contains many curious particulars: there is a ridiculous story of a demon, who for a considerable time assumed the character of a very learned and diligent clergyman: having become a favourite with his diocesan, he was accustomed to divert the prelate with many entertaining histories and surprising events not exactly to be found in the Bible. The conversation once turning upon the incarnation of our Saviour: "Before that event," said the relater, "the devils had great power over mankind, but afterwards it was considerably diminished, and they were obliged to flee. Some threw themselves into the sea, some concealed themselves in hollow trees or the clefts of rocks, and I myself plunged into a certain fountain. As soon as he had said this, finding that he had unguardedly discovered his secret, his face was covered with blushes, he suddenly quitted the apartment, and was seen no more."^b

^a Topograph. Hiber. c. 28.

^b Itin. Camb. lib. 1.

F.—Giraldus Cambrensis forms a sort of connecting link with the historians of this period, who, though possessing merit, are confessedly inferior to their predecessor, William of Malmesbury.

A.—If we consider them chronologically, the first in point of time was Benedict, abbot of Peterborough, who wrote a history of Henry the Second and Richard the First, from 1170 to 1192; to the latter monarch he was keeper of the great seal. His work is exact and circumstantial; and, from his opportunities, it is considered one of the best accounts of the transactions of his times: it contains some entire diplomatic pieces. He wrote also a life of Becket. William Little, called in Latin Gulielmus Neubrigensis, was a monk in the abbey of Newborough, in Yorkshire. His history of England in five books, from the Conquest to 1197, is in regularity and purity one of the most valuable productions of the time. In his preface he makes some very severe strictures on the British history of our old acquaintance, Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose work had lately appeared, which discover a degree of critical discernment not very common in those ages. William Little does not content himself with merely recounting facts in the manner of a chronicler, but he examines the political views and motives of the sovereign: his Latin style is also respectable. It is highly to his credit that, in relating the transactions between Henry and Becket, whilst all other historians are furious on the part of the archbishop, he alone treats the conduct of the king with candour and impartiality. Gervase of Canterbury wrote a chronicle of the kings of England, from 1122 to 1200. He possessed judgment, but a strict attention to chronology is his chief merit. He was more attentive to the affairs of his monastery than

to the political events of his time, and may be considered more as an advocate for the ecclesiastical order than an historian: he has various pieces relative to church history of some value. Radulphus de Diceto, archdeacon of London, wrote "*Abbrevationes Chronicorum*," a sort of abstract of Church history to the Conquest, and "*Imagines Historiarum*," containing some particulars of the kings of the Plantagenet race, ending with the first year of King John. His work is useful, relating some particulars omitted by other writers; it is, however, a mere statement of facts, without ascending to causes. Roger Hoveden is a very voluminous compiler. His annals of England, from 731 to 1202, contain a great variety of facts. His work has little beauty of style or regularity of arrangement, but is thought very trustworthy. Hoveden was born in Yorkshire, and became chaplain to Henry the Second. It is remarkable that these five historians end their narratives nearly at the same period, the close of the twelfth century. Various lives of Becket were written: one of them is singular for the mode of its composition; the particulars being detailed by four monks, friends and followers of the martyr, who each supplied his information in distinct paragraphs; the work is known by the title of "*Historia Quadrupartita*," or "*Quadrilogus*." A valuable life of Becket is also that by Fitz-Stephen, a monk of Canterbury, who relates that he was an eye-witness of Becket's martyrdom. This author has given, in another work, a curious description of London. His commendation both of the city and its inhabitants is great: the matrons, he says, were perfect Sabines; the two chief inconveniences of the metropolis were, "the excessive drinking of some foolish people, and the frequent fires."

P.—In these two particulars, the progress of six hundred and fifty years has made little alteration.

A.—Added to these sources of information is the collection of epistles between Becket and the principal monarchs of Europe, as well as several private persons, arranged in five books by John of Salisbury; a treasure not to be paralleled in the materials of any other part of our early English history, and approaching in interest and authenticity to the various memoirs of more recent times. The English writers of the twelfth century were not only superior in number, but in merit, to those of any nation in Europe; and it must be admitted that there existed in the kingdom a constellation of learning and talent, which, considered as a whole, far exceeded any thing that went before, or that for more than three centuries followed after.

DISSERTATION VII.

Salisbury Cathedral.

THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET,

CONTINUED.

HENRY III. - - - A.D. 1216.

A.—WE are once more in Wiltshire, a county beyond all others in the kingdom abounding with remains of antiquity, of a period so remote as to be beyond the elucidation of history; its capital, however, is remarkable, on the contrary, as being one of the few towns in England whose origin is precisely recorded.

F.—As children in the course of nature survive their parents, so has this city of New Sarum, or Salisbury, lived to see the complete extinction of its mother, Old Sarum, likewise called Salisbury, except in those two sparks of vitality which make their appearance, not indeed in the county, but in the House of Commons.

A.—The nucleus from whose attraction the city of New Sarum sprang into reputation, was its cathedral, founded in the year 1220 by Richard Poore, bishop of Salisbury, and dedicated in the presence of Henry the Third (1258) by Bishop Brideport. Old Sarum being situated on the apex of a hill, and surrounded by a

rampart, the clergy complained that it was exposed and inconvenient, and that they were frequently interrupted by the soldiers in the exercise of public worship; a bull from Pope Honorius sanctioned the design of Bishop Poore, and a charter from the king permitted the establishment of a new and free city.

F.—A ballad by Dr. Pope, as truly as humourously, expresses the transaction :—

Old Sarum was built on a dry barren hill,
A great many years ago :
'Twas a Roman town of strength and renown,
As its stately ruins show.

There was a castle for men of arms,
And a cloister for men of the gown :
There were friars and brothers, with various others,
Though not any whose names are come down.

The soldiers and churchmen did not long agree,
For the surly race with the hilt on,
Made sport at the gate, with the priests that came late
From shriving the nuns of Wilton.

A.—The town of New Sarum is built upon a fruitful soil, and near the junction of three rivers: the numerous streams flowing through almost every street, and supplied by sluices from the Avon, have given cause for the erection of almost as many bridges as are to be seen in Venice itself: but the cathedral is the peculiar object of interest; for though some metropolitan churches in England are more ancient, as Durham and Canterbury; some more spacious, or even more beautiful, as York and Lincoln; yet none can be compared with Salisbury in unity of design, bespeaking the completion of the fabric according to the original plan of the architect; the church before us being finished within forty years from its foundation.

F.—The ground plan of most English cathedrals is commonly in the form of the Latin cross, or plain cru-

cifix. This church, we may observe, besides the great transept, over which is the tower, has another transept nearer the east; a peculiarity of construction which produces a happy effect, both in variety and grandeur. The tapering spire is the loftiest in England; its summit not being less than four hundred and two feet from the surface.

P.—In entering this cathedral, we are at once stricken with the beauty of its interior; producing, in common with all large Gothic structures, an appropriate sensation of awe and religious musing.

F.—Some critics have been so perverse as to assert, that a Gothic building does not produce its full effect, unless it be accompanied with dirt and darkness; but the happy combination of grandeur and cheerfulness in Salisbury cathedral, remarkable for its light and neatness, is sufficient to refute such a position.

A.—The term Gothic, so universally applied to buildings with clusters of small pillars and pointed arches, though impossible to abolish, is evidently erroneous, as the Goths never erected, whilst a nation, any structures in a similar style; nor is a notion that it was invented by the Saracens in the sultry climate of the east, in imitation of an avenue of trees, at all better founded; the earliest as well as the best specimens being seen in our own country.

P.—Yet a Gothic cathedral certainly does remind us of the effect produced by an avenue of lofty elms, whether the style of architecture were invented in the east or the west.

A.—During the continuance of the Gothic style, the alterations which it underwent are as distinguishable by the antiquary's eye as the different Grecian orders. Its earliest form prevailed from the middle of the twelfth to the end of the thirteenth century, and is seen in the

cathedral before us. Its principal distinction, from subsequent periods, is the greater narrowness of the windows, which may be called lancet-shaped; in this church they are placed in threes, the central window being somewhat higher than its two supporters, which produces a very happy effect, and which in the same degree of uniformity is scarcely found elsewhere.

P.—The vulgar assert that Salisbury cathedral has as many gates and chapels as there are months in the year, as many windows as days, and as many pillars as hours.

A.—Such is the boldness and delicacy of the whole structure, that its architect seemed to be somewhat afraid of its stability; he would admit no bells into his church, probably apprehensive that their vibration would too much shake its walls; the belfry, a singular building, is therefore placed at a small distance. Amongst other adjuncts of this cathedral, the octagon chapter-house, whose roof is supported by a central pillar, has always been deservedly admired.

F.—The Normans seem to have been fonder of ecclesiastical architecture than any people that ever existed; the foundation of some of the English cathedrals was begun as early as the time of the Conqueror and his sons; but it was under the subsequent dominion of the Plantagenets, that the finest specimens rose in the full glory of their consummation.

A.—It has been very rationally supposed, that the introduction of Freemasonry into England was connected with the erection of these ecclesiastical structures: the Popes for obvious reasons encouraged the building of cathedrals and convents, and granted many indulgences by their bulls to the society of Masons engaged in such a good work, which consequently became very numerous, consisting of persons of va-

rious nations, Italians, Greeks, French, Germans, and Flemings. These fraternities styled themselves Freemasons;^a they ranged from one country to another, as they found churches to be built: there was a chief governor or surveyor to each company, and over every ten men was appointed a warden. Those who have seen the records of the expense of building some of our cathedrals, cannot but have a great esteem for the economy and expedition with which such lofty and extensive fabrics were erected.^b

F.—As “all trades have their secrets,” it is not to be imagined that the fraternity of Masons was without theirs: but the mysteries of modern Freemasonry, if there be any other than those of conviviality and good fellowship, still remaining in profound obscurity, it would be idle to speculate on the subject: the admission of members who were unconnected with some branch of the building business seems of comparatively late date in England. Sir Christopher Wren is thought to have heartily despised the whole mummary; and under his grand mastership the order materially declined: it has since been considerably extended, but to what useful purpose seems as great a secret as the initiatory ceremonies of the institution.

A.—To the patronage of Henry the Third we are indebted, not only for the erection of the beautiful fabric before us, but also for Westminster Abbey, consecrated by the best feelings of the nation as the sacred repository of the ashes of so many of the wise and great. At the accession of this prince to the throne, at the early age of nine years (1216), the situation of England was truly deplorable; a discontented people, a divided nobility, and a foreign enemy in the heart of the kingdom.

^a Wren, Parentalia.

^b Ibid.

F.—The death of king John at such a crisis was a fortunate circumstance. The young prince could not be the object of the national antipathy evinced against his father, which we have seen was carried to such an extent, that, for the purpose of disenthroning its tyrant, England was content to become even a province of France.

A.—The first year of Henry's reign was eminently prosperous. William Mareschal, Earl of Pembroke, one of those admirable men, whose lustre, from the rarity of their appearance, is rendered more conspicuous, was chosen protector, and by the force of his virtue rather than of his talents recalled the allegiance of the revolted barons. The French prince Lewis, who had passed over into his own country, found, on his return to England with fresh succours, that the death of John had, contrary to his expectation, much diminished the probability of his success: the hopes of Lewis soon after completely vanished, his army being routed at Lincoln by the Earl of Pembroke;^a and to add to his misfortune, the French fleet, having on board a considerable reinforcement, was defeated, chiefly it is said by a stratagem of the English admiral, who having gained the wind, threw in the face of his adversaries a great quantity of quick lime, by which they were blinded.^b

P.—The adage of throwing dust in the eyes was surely never exemplified to more advantage.

A.—The French prince, now become anxious even for his personal safety, joyfully consented to evacuate the kingdom; but honourably stipulated for an indemnity to his adherents, and an equal participation of the liberties accorded to the rest of the nation.^c The Earl of Pembroke unfortunately dying the next year

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Rymer, vol. 1. M. Paris.

(1217,) he was succeeded in the government by Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, a Poietevin by birth, and Hubert de Burgh, the justiciary—the Hubert of Shakspeare. The councils of the latter were chiefly followed, who possessed superior talents to Pembroke, but neither an equal portion of virtue nor of authority; and consequently the barons, soon breaking out into their accustomed disorders, filled the whole kingdom with their outrages and tumults.

P.—This turbulence of the barons seems to have been the cardinal defect of the age.

A.—Yet it must be admitted, that they had occasionally sufficient provocation; but their quarrels with Henry are too insignificant to deserve the attention of posterity: it is better to follow the example of Sir Robert Cotton, who called his history a short view of the long life and reign of Henry the Third.

P.—It is an odd coincidence, though hardly worth the remark, that the longest reigns in the English annals are those of the sovereigns who have been the third of their name, Henry III. Edward III. and George III.

A.—As Henry grew up to man's estate, he discovered a total absence of all strength of mind; and inheriting the antipathy of his father to Magna Charta, he considered his barons as enemies, leagued to deprive him of his prerogative: poor always from the imprudent facility of his disposition, he was often compelled to make promises which he had no intention of performing; such conduct could not fail to expose him to contempt and to excite animosity.

F.—A particular cause of the dislike of his barons, was Henry's avowed partiality for foreigners, a peculiarity which distinguished his whole reign.

A.—This partiality partly proceeded from an ill-grounded opinion, as it is supposed, of Peter des Roches, that by encouraging these favourites he could raise a counterpoise to the weight of the nobility. Henry having married Eleanor, daughter of the Count of Provence (1236,) he enriched many persons of that country with the most imprudent generosity; and in the space of a few years, his mother, who had returned to France and espoused her former lover the Count de la Marche, from whose arms she had been torn by King John, sent her four sons by the second marriage to be provided for by their half-brother. Henry bestowed upon them such improvident grants as to cause universal discontent. The rapacity of these foreigners was equalled only by their insolence: when remonstrated with, that their conduct was contrary to the English laws, they scrupled not to reply, "What do the laws of England signify to us? we regard them not;" pretty much following the king's example, who was accustomed to excuse his frequent violation of the liberties of his subjects, by saying, "Why should I observe the charter, when it is neglected by all the nobility and prelates?"^a

F.—It was once however very reasonably replied to him, "You ought, Sir, to set the example."^b

A.—King Henry's exchequer being exhausted by this profusion, as well as by the expense of frequent petty broils with the king of France, in which he was constantly worsted, his necessities compelled him perpetually to harass his subjects with applications for money: he asserted that alms given to him were more charitably bestowed than on the wretch who begged from door to door: it is even said, that the officers of

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

the household robbed on the highway by permission of their royal master,^a who shared the spoil. Nor were Henry's demands the only drain upon the national purse, as the exactions of the court of Rome were carried to an excess which surpasses any thing to be found in the English history.

F.—These claims seem not to have been at all resisted by Henry, the Pope and the king standing too much in need of each other's assistance. It was only through the connivance of Henry that the Pope could fleece the English clergy; and the Pontiff in return protected Henry against the encroachments of his barons.

P.—Perhaps the Pope, still considering himself lord paramount of England, by the resignation of King John, urged his pretensions with less apprehension of resistance.

A.—That delicate point was more frequently acted on than openly avowed. Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, in a general council held at Lyons (1253,) exclaimed against this pretension of the holy see, asserting that John had no right without the consent of his barons to subject the kingdom to such an ignominious servitude;^b and the Popes henceforward little insisted on the claim: but ecclesiastical abuses had become so enormous as even to open the eyes of superstition itself. Mansel, the king's chaplain, possessed no fewer than seven hundred livings;^c the chief benefices in the nation were conferred on Italians; and a legate, at all times a bird of evil omen, was sent to enforce the payment of a tenth of the ecclesiastical revenues, from the produce of which, and by other exactions, he is said to have taken out of the kingdom on his return

^a M. Paris. Vitæ Abbat.

^b M. Paris.

^c Ibid.

more money than he left in it.^a The demands of Rome were so enormous, and continued to be urged with such unblushing effrontery, as to become really ludicrous: the clergy winced and struggled, but to no purpose. In an assembly before the legate, the bishop of Worcester exclaimed, that he would sooner lose his life than comply with such exactions; the bishop of London said, that the Pope and the king were more powerful than he, but if his mitre were taken off his head, he would supply its place with a helmet.^b But these bravadoes were soon silenced by the threat of excommunication, which the bishops well knew would make the whole of their revenues fall into the hands of the king.

F.—For the honour of the bench, it ought not to be forgotten, that one prelate, Robert Grosstête, bishop of Lincoln, on several occasions made resistance somewhat more effectual.

A.—Innocent the Fourth, an imperious pontiff, commanded this bishop to bestow on the Pope's nephew, an infant, a living of considerable value; and in his bull for that purpose inserted the scandalous clause of *non obstante*, so justly complained of in that and indeed in every age, as utterly annihilating the rights and liberties of the church; its meaning being, that when the Pope had a mind to dispose of a benefice, he inserted in his brief *non obstante*, notwithstanding the right of patronage, or other privilege to the contrary. This mischievous example was imitated too by Henry, and by many subsequent monarchs, under the name of the dispensing power; a happy expedient to elude the laws and oppress the subject. Grosstête, however, far from complying with the Pope's request, replied in a strain of such freedom as to throw his

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

holiness into a violent passion : the haughty Pontiff in his rage swore by St. Peter and St. Paul, that he would utterly confound such an old, dreaming, impertinent dotard, and make him an example and an astonishment to the whole world ; but his cardinals remonstrating on the danger of persecuting a prelate so renowned for piety and learning, the offence was overlooked. “ Why (said they, very sensibly,) should we raise a tumult in the church without necessity, and precipitate that revolt and separation from us which we know must one day take place ? ”

P.—A remarkable prediction, especially considering where and when spoken.

A.—The authority for the story is Matthew Paris, who gives the name of the cardinal, Ægidius, a Spaniard, who uttered the remark, and says, that various others of the Pope’s counsellors used the same argument.

P.—The subject naturally leads to an enquiry how far the influence of the church was noxious or beneficial in these rude and turbulent ages.

F.—Its chief benefit seems to have consisted in the necessity of acknowledging an authority which was by profession averse to arms and violence. The interference of the clergy often mitigated the fierceness of the times, protected the weak and defenceless, and thus preserved or revived the peace and order of society.

A.—But it may be fairly doubted, whether this advantage was not more than counterbalanced by the encouragement of the most debasing superstition, which endangered the very existence of mental liberty.

F.—Yet it should be remembered, that before the invention of printing, all the knowledge of the age

emanated from the ecclesiastics, and seems nearly to have been confined to that body. To them we are solely indebted for the preservation of the inestimable relics of antiquity. In every convent was a school in which several parts of learning were taught, and many of the younger monks were constantly employed in transcribing books.^a It indeed became a proverb, that a monastery without a library was like a castle without an armoury;^b so that the general ignorance may be fairly attributed, as much to the taste and manners of the times, as to an indisposition in the clergy to communicate a moderate portion of letters. Abbeyes too were in some sort the palladiums of public liberty, by the custody of the royal charters and most of the records.

A.—But the power exercised by the court of Rome in England, we must admit to have been a pure and unmixed evil: the head of the church, being a foreigner, was commonly guided by views and interests different, if not contrary, to those of the nation. In the reign of Henry the Third, the kingdom was pillaged to the utmost, without fear or shame. The Pope once admiring the embroidered vestments worn by some English clergymen, enquired where they were made; and on being answered in England, he cried out, “Oh England, thou garden of delights, thou inexhaustible fountain of riches, from thee I can never exact too much.”^c In this spirit, a happy project was devised by the Pope, which succeeded to admiration. Soon after the death of the emperor Frederic the Second (1250), who inherited the crown of Sicily from his mother Constantia, a princess of Norman race, that kingdom was usurped by Mainfroy, his natural son,

^a M. Paris, *Vitæ Abb.*

^b Martene, *Anecd.* tom. 1.

^c M. Paris.

under pretence of governing during the minority of the infant heir ; but this arrangement displeasing the Pope, he interfered, on the plausible pretence that the Norman kings of Sicily, of the race of Tancred of Hauteville, having consented to hold their kingdom as a fief of the Holy See, he could dispose of it at his pleasure, and consequently he made an offer of the Sicilian crown to Henry's second son, Edmund Crouchback, so called from the deformity of his person.^a

F.—The specious present had been previously tendered to Richard, earl of Cornwall, the brother of Henry, supposed to be the richest subject in Europe, who, like the king, was equally fond of acquiring money, but unlike him in the tenacity with which he retained it. On this occasion, either the avarice or the good sense of the earl caused him to refuse the insidious proposal : “ You might as well say to me,” replied he to the agent of the holy father, “ I give you the moon, climb up and take it.”^b

A.—Henry, dazzled with the magnificence of the gift, at once accepted it, without consulting either his brother or the parliament ; and allowing the Pope unlimited credit for whatever sums he thought necessary to complete the conquest, the king on a sudden found himself involved in an immensity of debt,^c which he had no means to liquidate.

F.—The Earl of Cornwall too, in his turn, at last permitted vanity and ambition to prevail over prudence and avarice, by engaging in an undertaking equally futile and vexatious : his immense opulence induced some of the German princes to propose him as a candidate for the empire, again become vacant (1246) ; and as long as his money lasted, he found partizans, and

^a M. Paris.

^b *Ibid.*

^c Rymer, vol. 1.

even succeeded so far as to be elected King of the Romans; but his power having no real foundation, a splendid title was all that he acquired to compensate for the loss of the accumulated savings of a long life of frugality.^a

A.—The contrivances of the Pope were really diverting; sometimes he flattered, sometimes threatened the king; now the project upon Sicily was upon the point of succeeding, anon every thing was baffled; but the termination of all these varieties was a fresh demand of money, for the acquisition of a crown which he had determined that neither Henry nor any of his family should ever enjoy; for, ultimately, the Pope consented to the accession of Charles of Anjou, brother to the French king, Louis the Ninth.^b

P.—The reign of Henry, it must be acknowledged, is singularly uninteresting; in the lapse nearly of forty years, not a single incident has arisen calculated to strike the imagination or to dwell upon the memory.

A.—The subsequent part will afford matter of more importance. A little before this period, the king, overwhelmed by his embarrassments, called a parliament and demanded their assistance in a crusade against the infidels, which he had vowed to undertake; but this assembly, availing itself of his necessities, made the solemn renewal of the Great Charter, the provisions of which Henry was constantly breaking, the price of compliance. The barons, prelates, and abbots met in Westminster Hall; the charter was read aloud, and then a sentence of excommunication against all who should violate its provisions; at the conclusion, the ecclesiastics threw down the lighted tapers which each held in his hand, crying with one voice, "So may every

^a M. Paris.

^b Rymer, vol. 1.

soul be extinguished, and stink in hell, who shall incur this sentence." To which the king, laying his right hand on his heart, replied, "So help me God, as I shall faithfully observe these articles, as I am a man, as I am a Christian, as I am a knight, and as I am a crowned and anointed king."^a These obligations, though solemn and legal, were soon broken through by Henry, more perhaps from the pitiable weakness of his disposition than from any desire to oppress; but at length the multitude of vexations and grievances became intolerable, and the barons openly resolved to take the administration into their own hands.

F.—In this undertaking, they were chiefly prompted by the ambition of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester; a remarkable person, to whose fortunate innovations the English enjoy, at the distance of five centuries, the advantage of a representative government.

A.—This nobleman was the younger son of Simon de Montfort, too well renowned for his success and cruelty in the religious crusade against the Albigenses in France, a sect which differed little from the protestants of the reformation. The elder De Montfort having married Amicia, a daughter and co-heiress of Robert Blanchmains, earl of Leicester, the vast estates of that baron devolved to his family; but his eldest son, Amauri de Montfort, inheriting still larger possessions in France, and being incapable of performing fealty to two masters, his rights were transferred to Simon, who came over to England, did homage for his lands, and was soon after created Earl of Leicester. He was admitted to a high degree of favour with Henry, who united him to the royal family, giving him in marriage the Countess Dowager of Pembroke, the king's sister,^b whom indeed he is said first to have seduced.

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

F.—For these abundant favours, it must be owned, that Leicester made no very grateful return. Possessing great insinuation and address, he preferred gaining a popularity with the nation to the fickle friendship of the king.

A.—Leicester was trusted with public employments, and acquitted himself with ability: returning from Guienne, whither he had been sent to repress some discontents, in which service he had exercised too much severity, it became necessary to institute an enquiry into his conduct before the Peers, who ultimately acquitted him. During the progress of the trial, Henry disclosed an inclination to have the Earl found guilty, which so much provoked the latter, that he plainly said to the king, “You ought rather to have rewarded me for my actions in Guienne according to your royal word.” Henry sharply replied, that he did not think himself obliged to keep his word with a traitor; to which Leicester retorted, “Were you not a king, you would find it an evil hour in which you uttered such language;” adding, that it was hard to believe such a prince was a Christian, or had ever been at confession. “Yes,” answered the king, “I am a Christian, and have often been at confession.” “What signifies confession without repentance,” rejoined the earl. “I never repented any thing so much,” said the king, “as the bestowal of my favours on one that has so little gratitude and so much ill manners.”^a

P.—In this strange conference we hardly know which most to wonder at, the unparalleled insolence of the subject, or the patience of the sovereign.

A.—Henry was accustomed to hear remonstrances with an extraordinary degree of composure. The Countess of Arundel once waited upon him, about her

^a M. Paris.

right to a certain wardship: when she found that she could not prevail, she thus accosted him: "My lord the king, why do you turn your face from justice? for no person can obtain any right in your court; and you govern neither yourself nor us as you ought. Are you not ashamed to oppress the church and disquiet the nobles of your kingdom?" The king, knitting his brows, answered, "What do you mean, lady Countess; have the great men in England commissioned you to be their advocate?" The dame, though a young woman, replied in the spirit of a more mature age, "Not so, Sir, the nobles have not granted me any such charter, though you have broken that which you and your father swore inviolably to observe. Where are the liberties of England, so often granted and so often withdrawn? It is this infraction which induces me, although a woman, to appeal, with all your natural subjects, from you to the tribunal of God, the great and terrible Judge, and let him revenge." At these words, Henry was confounded, and he answered only, "Did you not ask a favour because you were my cousin?" She replied, "Since you have denied me right, how can I expect any favour?"* The king, thus reproved, said no more; and the countess went away without taking leave, or receiving any other satisfaction than that of having freely spoken her mind.

P.—Which, to a female, you must own to have been considerable.

A.—Yet this monarch was certainly not destitute of a talent for sarcasm and repartee. The monks of Durham objecting to the youth of his half-brother, whom he would have imposed on that see, he replied, "Since you think my brother too young, I will keep

* M. Paris.

the bishoprick in my own hand till he shall be of a fit age.”^a

F.—A more celebrated retort was his reply to four bishops, who were deputed by parliament to complain of his uncanonical and irregular mode of filling up vacant benefices. “It is true,” said Henry, “that I have been somewhat faulty in that particular; I obtruded you, my lord of Canterbury, upon your see; I was obliged to employ both entreaties and menaces, my lord of Winchester, to get you elected, when you should rather have been at school; my proceedings were very irregular and violent, my lords of Salisbury and Carlisle, when I raised you from the lowest stations to your present dignities: it will become you, therefore, to set the example of reformation, by resigning your present benefices, and then you may try to enter again in a more regular and canonical manner.” The bishops had the presence of mind to reply, that the question was not to correct past errors, but to avoid future.^b

A.—Of the ascendancy of Leicester’s spirit we have a remarkable instance: the king once going by water to the Tower, was overtaken by a storm of thunder and lightning, and he ordered his barge to be put to shore: being met on his landing by Leicester, his terror redoubled; which the earl observing, remarked, that the storm being over, there was no further reason of fear. The king replied, “I am, indeed, beyond measure frightened at thunder and lightning; but, by God’s head, I fear thee more than all the thunder in the universe.”^c

F.—Indeed this apprehension was not without a very legitimate cause; as Leicester, under the well-grounded pretence of reforming the abuses of the times,

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

soon became a dangerous competitor for even the sovereign power itself.

A.—Urged by the complaints of Leicester, the king held a parliament at Oxford (1258): denominated in our annals, the Mad Parliament, from the confusion which attended its measures, called “the provisions of Oxford,” which directed, that twelve barons should be elected from the king’s council, and that twelve more should be chosen by the parliament, “who conjointly were to reform the prevailing abuses.” The first step of this supreme council, of which Leicester was at the head, was singularly judicious; four knights were ordered to be chosen by each county, to enquire into its particular grievances, and represent them to the next ensuing parliament.^a

F.—This may be considered then, as the very first example of elective members to be found in that assembly.

A.—But it may be doubted, whether these knights sat as members, or merely attended for the purpose of giving information. So corrupting is the possession of power, that the twenty-four barons soon engrossed the whole authority of the state, changed the government from a monarchy into a very limited aristocracy, and acted as if their whole purpose had been to aggrandize themselves and their families. The king having applied to Rome for an absolution of his vows, the most violent contentions ensued; the citizens of London in particular, taking part with the barons, gave way to every sort of licence and disorder, plundering and setting on fire the houses, both of the Jews and Lombards. The queen, who had taken up her abode in the Tower, naturally became desirous of escaping from such a scene of confusion; but, as her barge approached Lon-

^a Rymer, vol. 1. M. Paris.

don-bridge, the populace pelted her with rotten eggs and dirt, to which they added the most opprobrious language; and shouting, "Drown the witch, drown the witch," they drove her back to the Tower.^a

P.—We are then to conclude that ambition, rather than the reformation of abuses, was the motive of Leicester's conduct?

A.—Without any great breach of charity, I think it may be so conceded: the earl had no personal wrongs to avenge. After frequent pretended reconciliations with Henry, an appeal was made by common consent to Louis the Ninth, king of France, to whose moderate and equitable decision^b Leicester, unwilling to resign his power, refused to submit; and resorting to arms, a civil war, with all its horrors, presently raged through the greater part of the kingdom.

F.—The detail of petty battles is of little interest, the result may be found worthy of attention.

A.—After various skirmishes, the two armies of the king and the earl met in a battle at Lewes, in Sussex (1264), in which Leicester displayed considerable military skill, and made the king, with his son Prince Edward, and his brother the king of the Romans, prisoners:^c the loss on both sides amounted to five thousand men.

F.—The king of the Romans seems always to have been an unpopular character. On this occasion, a satirical song or ballad was put forth by one of Leicester's adherents, which to understand, we are to be informed that the barons had offered Richard thirty thousand pounds to procure a peace upon such terms as would have divested Henry of all his regal power: on these conditions Richard refused his assent.

^a Wykes, Chron.

^b Rymcr, vol. I.

^c M. Paris.

Sitteth alle stille and herkeneth to me,
 The kyng of Alemaigne, bi mi leantè
 Thritti thousand pound askede he,
 For to make the pees in the countrè,
 And so he dude more;
 Richard thah thou be ever trichard,
 Tricthen shall thou never more.^a

Which last two lines are a burden to several verses of similar complexion with this the first.

P.—From this early specimen, we may infer that the liberty assumed by the good people of this country in abusing their princes, is a privilege of very ancient standing. In this action at Lewes, we for the first time hear the name of Prince Edward.

A.—He was now of the age of twenty-six, and had already displayed many of those great qualities, by which on the throne he was afterwards distinguished. This complete victory gave to Leicester an unbounded ascendancy: he concluded a treaty with the king, called the *Mise* of Lewes, from an obsolete French word, meaning an agreement, the terms of which, he afterwards violated in most particulars; and growing wanton with prosperity, gave full scope to his avarice and ambition: he appropriated to himself the possessions of no fewer than eighteen of the barons of the king's party, and the entire ransom of all the prisoners; he had the insolence to tell even the barons of his own party, that it was sufficient for them that he had saved their estates, by his victory, from forfeiture and attainer.^b

P.—But amidst such violations of his engagements, how did Leicester retain the favour of the nation?

A.—By cultivating popularity with the humbler classes of the community: in pursuance of this policy,

^a Percy Relics, vol. 2.

^b Knyghton.

he summoned a parliament, January 1265, in which, he ordered returns to be made of two knights from each shire; and what indeed is remarkable, of deputies from the cities and boroughs, an order of men hitherto considered as too mean to enjoy a place in the national counsels. What towns sent representatives besides the metropolis, York, Lincoln, and the Cinque Ports, is not known. The declaration, after mentioning the former cities, merely adds, *ceteris burgis Angliæ*, the rest of the boroughs of England.^a This parliament of Leicester's must undoubtedly be considered as the original *punctum saliens* of our present House of Commons.

F.—That opinion was for a long time disputed with acrimonious zeal by English antiquaries; but the objectors seem to have silently retired. What order of men constituted the former parliaments, or great councils, we may infer from the following section of Magna Charta: "The king shall cause to be summoned, as the common council of the kingdom, the archbishops, bishops, earls and great barons, personally, by our letters, and by our sheriffs and bailiffs, all others, who hold of us in chief."—Not a word here is said of representatives.

A.—To Leicester's parliament the nobility and prelates of his faction only were summoned; but to make up the deficiency, he added a considerable number of inferior priors and abbots, who were not even tenants of the crown: we have no hint that this parliament was divided into two houses, and we know little more of its proceedings, than that in it were taken into consideration, the terms of setting Prince Edward at liberty. Leicester continuing his tyrannical

^a Rymer, vol. 1.

conduct, raised dissensions amongst his own party: the Earl of Gloucester, his principal coadjutor, having retired to his estates^a on the borders of Wales, was pursued by Leicester with a considerable force, carrying with him the two royal prisoners, the king and the prince. The latter by finding means to escape gave a new turn to affairs: the mode of its accomplishment was attended with some degree of romantic interest. The prince, having received from the Earl of Gloucester a horse of extraordinary swiftness, pretended to take the air with his guards; proposing matches between their horses, he sufficiently tired them; when a little before sun-set, having mounted Gloucester's horse, a person appeared on a grey charger at Tulington-hill, waving his bonnet; the prince, who knew the signal, galloped off, telling his keepers that he had long enough enjoyed the pleasure of their company; and soon after, Roger Mortimer, a friendly baron, with a band of armed men issuing from a wood, received him with acclamations, and conveyed him in safety to Wigmore Castle.^b

F.—It is these two noblemen, who are celebrated in Gray's Ode, as the companions of Edward on another occasion.

Stout Gloucester stood aghast in speechless trance;

To arms, cried Mortimer, and couch'd his quivering lance.

A.—Prince Edward and Gloucester having raised a considerable army, Leicester became sensible of his dangerous situation: as he lay at Evesham, expecting a reinforcement, he was surprized by Edward's army, which he at first mistook for friends; on seeing their excellent discipline, he exclaimed, "The Lord have mercy on our souls, for I see our bodies are the

^a M. Paris.

^b T. Wykes.

prince's; he has learned from me the art of war."^a The earl was slain in the heat of the battle (August 4, 1265), and his forces totally routed.

F.—Another particular deserves mention: Leicester had cruelly placed the old king in the front of the battle, dressed in a suit of his own armour: ^b being thus unknown, he received a wound, and was in danger of losing his life; but characteristically crying out to the soldier who was about to slay him, "I am Henry of Winchester, your king, do not kill me;" the blow was prevented, and Henry put in a place of safety.^c

A.—The clemency exercised by the conqueror in this complete victory was remarkable; no blood was shed upon the scaffold; the mild disposition of the king, and the prudence of the prince, tempering the insolence of success. The rage of civil discord, after a few ebullitions, gradually ceasing, order was restored to the several members of the state, which continued with but small interruptions during the remainder of the reign.

F.—Such then was the violent end of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, a man whose boundless and unprincipled ambition was sustained by commanding vigour of intellect and great suppleness of address; since, though a stranger in the kingdom, and at a time when strangers were most odious, he could acquire so extensive an interest with all orders of men, as nearly to pave the way to the acquisition of the throne itself.

A.—But though Leicester was not a native of England, yet inheriting a vast estate from his mother, an Englishwoman, he was not like the strangers so much complained of, a burden to the nation: to his policy it undoubtedly owes the greatest advantage which it ever

^a Hemingford.

^b Knyghton.

^c Hemingford.

received from a single individual, the introduction to parliament of a representative body of the people.

F.—Some historians have endeavoured to deprive Leicester of this renown, by representing his experiment as only a slight anticipation of what must necessarily have happened from the increasing importance of the Commons; but had not his penetrating view brought the system into existence, it might have slept for centuries. In how many inventions have we not observed previous projectors to arrive within the very verge of discovery, and then unaccountably turn aside from the direct road, leaving the object in its original obscurity.

A.—Leicester was long revered by the populace, and miracles were pretended to be wrought at his tomb;^a his family falling into decay, in a generation or two became extinct; and so capricious is fame, that at the present day his name and actions are little remembered and regarded. How different in point of popularity is Leicester's reputation with that of his renowned contemporary, Robin Hood!

P.—The fame of that outlaw is indeed unparalleled.

In this our spacious isle, I think there is not one

But who hath heard some talk of him and little John :^b

and it would be curious to enquire on what basis such a mighty popularity has been erected.

A.—It has been continued through six centuries with undiminished favour, to the present hour. Robin Hood has been the subject of dramatic exhibitions, of songs, ballads, and stories, without number: he has given rise to divers proverbs: his deeds have been alluded to by bishops in the pulpit,^c and by judges on

^a Chron. de Mailros.

^b Drayton, Polyolbion, song 26.

^c Latimer, 6th Serm. before Edw. VI.

the bench :^a many places have received their name from his frequentation : his accoutrements were preserved like religious relics : festivals^b and solemn games have been instituted in honour of his memory, which were celebrated for ages, both in Scotland and England.

F.—This is evidence of the fact, but does not explain the cause, why the name of a robber and an outlaw should have become

Familiar to our mouths as household words ;

and why, instead of reproach, it should be attended with a feeling of regard and esteem ?

A.—Undaunted courage, with a certain manliness of character and love of freedom, however lawless, joined to much humanity, seem to be the foundation of this extraordinary attraction. Robin Hood too, from his superior skill, became the hero of archery ; a science most important in English warfare before the introduction of fire-arms.

Their arrows finely paired for timber and for feather,
With birch and brazil pieced, to fly in any weather ;
And shot they with the round, the square, or forked pile,
The loose gave such a twang as might be heard a mile.^c

F.—Robin Hood's levelling principle of taking from the rich and giving to the poor, would at all times render him the favourite of the common people ; to which may be added, his avowed hostility to overgrown churchmen, who, being often obtruded on the nation by the court of Rome, were not at this period in remarkable odour.

From wealthy abbots' chests, and churls' abundant store,
What oftentimes he took, he shared amongst the poor :
No lordly bishop came in lusty Robin's way,
To him before he went, but for his pass must pay.^d

^a Ritson's Robin Hood, vol. 1, p. 20.

^b Stow, Survey.

^c Drayton.

^d Ibid.

P.—The scenery of the forest, the greenwood tree, the bounding deer, the summer bower, doubtless take a very pleasing hold of the imagination; and consequently, from this poetic feeling, I suppose that Robin Hood's exploits must chiefly be sought in the treasures of legendary and ballad lore.

A.—The following particulars seem to be independent of poetry: they are extracted from a sort of MS. life, in the Sloane library at the British Museum (715), of the date of the sixteenth century:^a Robin Hood was born at Lockesley, in Nottinghamshire (1160), and being early addicted to riotous courses, was outlawed for debt. Seeking an asylum in the woods, with which the northern part of the kingdom then abounded, he met with associates, many of whom were probably amenable to the severity of the forest laws; and being good marksmen, they protected themselves by numbers from the dreadful effects of their delinquency. Of these his companions, the names of Little John, Will Scadlock or Scarlet, George à Greene, the pinder or poundkeeper of Wakefield, Much, a miller's son, and a certain Friar Tuck, are well known. Robin Hood too is said to have been accompanied by a female of whom he was enamoured, and whose real or feigned name was Marian. In this community, for a long series of years, he seemed to set kings, judges, and magistrates at defiance; but the infirmities of old age increasing upon him, he thought it necessary to let blood, and applying to his relation, the abbess of Kirkby's nunnery, in Yorkshire, he was treacherously suffered to bleed to death, in the eighty-seventh year of his age (1247). He was interred under some trees, at a short distance from the house; a stone, with an inscription thereon, being placed over his grave.

^a Ritson's Robin Hood.

F.—It is singular that the name of Robin Hood is not mentioned by any contemporary historian: as the writers of that age were monks, his avowed hostility to churchmen has been suggested as the cause of their silence.

A.—This motive could not apply to Matthew Paris, who was accustomed to spare neither prelate nor Pope. The earliest history in which the name of Robin Hood occurs, is that of Fordun,^a a Scottish historian, who wrote about the year 1340, in which *Robertus Hode, famosissimus sicarius, et Litill Johanne* are thus alluded to: “Concerning whom the ignorant vulgar in comedies and tragedies make foolish entertainment, and are delighted to hear the jesters and minstrels sing about them beyond all other ballads.” Another Scottish writer, Major, about a century later, thus describes the character and actions of Robin Hood: “In these forests, with a company of one hundred archers, most skilful in battle, whom four times that number would not attack, he reigned like an independent sovereign, in perpetual war with the king of England and all his subjects; but he took away the goods of rich men only, never killing any person, unless he was attacked or resisted; he would not suffer a woman to be maltreated, and he relieved the poor out of the spoils of the wealthy. I disapprove,” adds the historian, “of the rapine of the man; but he was the most humane and the prince of all robbers.”

F.—But an earlier testimony to the fame of Robin Hood, and indeed the first known instance of his name being mentioned, is a curious rhyming Latin poem of the date of 1304, still in MS. in the British Museum,^b written by a certain prior of Alnwick on the battle of Dunbar, in which Sir William Wallace is invidiously compared to the English outlaw.

^a Scotchchronicon.

^b Ritson, vol. 1, p. 42.

A.—The original songs and ballads, and the most ancient poems on the subject, in the English tongue, have perished by the lapse of time, and all we know of them is, that such things once existed. In the vision of *Pierce Plowman*, an allegorical poem (1360), the author introduces an idle dissolute priest, who confesses that he is not “perfect in his paternoster, but can rhyme of Robin Hood.” The earliest ballad extant is that called “*A lyttel Geste of Robin Hood*,” in the public library at Cambridge, printed by Wynken de Worde, about the year 1520; but written, it is supposed, about half a century earlier: it is in eight fyttes or parts: it stands the first in Ritson’s collection, and thus begins:

Lithe and listen, gentylmen,
That be of frebore blode;
I shall tell you of a good yeman,
His name was Robin Hode.

P.—This verse represents him as a “good yeman;” and another ballad relates—

The father of Robin a forester was;

but is he not elsewhere elevated to the title of Earl of Huntingdon?

A.—Those who take this ground give him the surname of Fitz-ooth, and kindly derive his pedigree from Judith, niece of William the Conqueror.^a They have also provided for him an epitaph, in which he is installed in this high honour;^b but as the earldom of Huntingdon, during the life of Robin Hood, was vested in the Scottish royal family,^c and as Fordun, at a period when high birth was all in all, never glances at his nobility, we may fairly set down the notion as an unwarranted tradition.

F.—Yet Ieland calls him “*nobilis exlex* ;”^d but the

^a Stukely, *Palæographia Brit.* ^b Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis*, Appendix.

^c Dugdale, *Baronage*, vol. 1, p. 609.

^d Collect. vol. 1, p. 54.

opinion has been much upheld by the existence of two old plays (1601), by Anthony Munday and Thomas Chettle; the first of which is entitled "the Downfal of Robert, earl of Huntingdon, afterwards called Robin Hood, of merry Sherwood, with his love to chaste Matilda, the Lord Fitzwater's daughter, afterwards his fair maid Marian." The second play is "the Death of Robin Hood, with the lamentable tragedie of chaste Matilda, poisoned at Dunmow by King John." These plays refer to compositions not now to be found, and to traditions almost forgotten; but they carry fiction on their face, as it cannot well be supposed that the Lord Fitzwater's daughter, who seems really to have repulsed the solicitations of King John,^a should become the associate of outlaws and robbers. The genuine effigy of this lady is still to be seen on her monument in the church at Dunmow.^b

A.—The greater part of the songs and ballads now extant, on the subject of Robin Hood, are of a date comparatively recent: many of them contain very ridiculous anachronisms, but they are a striking proof of the continued interest of the subject, which remains undiminished to the present hour. But a very few years since a drama of "Maid Marian" was performed, with success, in London; and the powerful Genius of the North has not disdained to give a prominent station to the inmates of merry Sherwood in his popular composition, "Ivanhoe."

F.—As the name of Little John is constantly coupled with that of Robin Hood, we ought not to deprive this Fidus Achates of his due meed of commemoration.

Though he was called Little, his limbs they were large;
And his stature was seven feet high.

* * * * *

^a Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vol. 2, p. 76.

^b Gough, *Sepulchral Mon.* vol. 1, p. 31.

Then Robin he took the pretty sweet babe,
And clothed him from top to toe,
In garments of green, most gay to be seen,
And gave him a curious long bow.

The honour of Little John's death and burial is contended for by rival nations. He is said by Ashmole to have been buried in Derbyshire; by Hector Boece, at Pette, in North Britain; whilst another authority, Walker, relates that this excellent marksman was hanged for a robbery, on Arbor Hill, near Dublin.^a

A.—Though “the merry pranks” of these worthies were chiefly played in the days of Richard the First, who indeed is represented, in some ballads, as seeking the forest in disguise; and also in the time of King John; yet as Robin Hood ended his life under Henry the Third, he seems more naturally to fall within the history of this reign.

P.—Which is indeed sufficiently barren of events, and requires some enlivening.

A.—After the settlement of affairs by the battle of Evesham (1265), the remainder of Henry's reign presents no object of importance. Prince Edward, inflamed with military ardour, long sought an opportunity to distinguish himself in the Holy Land: his personal courage was at all times conspicuous; in a single combat with Adam de Gourdon, a rebellious baron, in Hampshire, he with the utmost difficulty subdued his antagonist, whom he at length unhorsed, and with great generosity not only saved his life, but received him into favour, which confidence was afterwards repaid by the grateful baron with the most affectionate service.^b

P.—With such endowments, how much more would Edward have benefited his country by checking the abuses of government at home, than by seeking a precarious reputation in the useless contest of the crusades.

^a Ritson.

^b M. Paris.

A.—He was probably seduced by the example of Louis the Ninth, king of France, whose fame in Europe stood deservedly high, notwithstanding his excessive bigotry, and his imprudent passion for these expeditions; for which, at last, he paid very dear, both in the loss of blood and treasure. Prince Edward's inclination to the same pursuit was so highly wrought, that, on being remonstrated with on the danger to which England would be exposed by his absence, he smote his breast, and swore by the blood of God, "though all should desert me, yet will I go to Acon, if I am attended only by Fowen, my groom."^a

F.—He had, however, a more agreeable companion in the person of his spouse, Eleanor, princess of Castile.

A.—Edward's progress in the Holy Land was not considerable; but his own valour, and the reputation of his great-uncle, Richard, so terrified the Infidels, that they sent an assassin to despatch him. This man had found means to be frequently introduced to the prince; and one day, being alone with him in his chamber, attempted to give him a mortal stab, which Edward alertly warding off, received a wound in his arm. The assassin, enraged at the disappointment, was about to renew the attack, when the prince kicked him on the breast, beat him down, and wresting the dagger from his grasp, killed him on the spot; but the weapon having been poisoned, Edward's wound became dangerous.^b

P.—Does the story rest on any authentic foundation, that Edward owed his life to the tender affection of Eleanor, who, at the hazard of her own, ventured to suck the venom from the wound.

F.—Camden first mentions it in his *Britannia*, quoting Rodericus, archbishop of Toledo, as his au-

^a M. Paris.^b M. Paris. Hemingf.

thority; but unfortunately the history written by that prelate was finished twenty years before the incident occurred. However, the same antiquary, in his *Remains*, quotes the authority of Rodericus Sanctius, who, it appears, mentions the circumstance in honour of the general character of the Spanish ladies;^a but this writer lived two centuries after the event, and the story is doubtless fictitious. Hemingford says, that the grand master of the Templars immediately sent the prince plenty of precious drugs to stop the progress of the poison; but a mortification being apprehended, an English physician undertook to cut out the gangrene; the princess not being able to endure the sight of the operation, Edward ordered two knights, Edmond and John de Vesey, to lead her from the apartment, and they told her, it was better that she should weep than all England.

A.—During the absence of the prince, King Henry, worn out by cares and infirmities, expired at St. Edmundsbury, in the sixty-fourth year of his age and the fifty-sixth of his reign. His corpse was interred in the church of his own erecting at Westminster,^b where his monument is still preserved. This monarch was of a moderate stature, and unpleasing countenance, his left eyelid hanging down, and half-covering the pupil;^c but this particular is not observable in his effigy in Westminster Abbey.

F.—The character, or rather no character, of Henry there is no difficulty in understanding. But, though personally inoffensive, he was once exposed to the danger of assassination: a maniac repaired to the palace at Woodstock, and demanded of Henry the kingdom; the king, seeing the lunatic's state of mind, forbade any one to hurt him, and he was dismissed; but the

^a Lib. 1.^b M. Paris.^c Ibid.

next night he found means to climb in at the window, and with an unsheathed knife ran to the king's bed; fortunately, Henry being in another chamber escaped the blow; one of the queen's ladies, Margaret Bisset, who was singing her Psalter, saw the assassin, and shrieking violently, alarmed the attendants; the maniac fastened the door, which they at length broke open and secured the intruder, who was afterwards executed for the offence.*

A.—The source of the many evils which afflicted the reign of Henry, was the want of constitutional firmness, which exposed him to the successive impressions of persons interested to mislead; looking only to the present moment, his prevarications, his breach of promise, his capricious changes of conduct, rendered him contemptible; his personal courage was doubtful; his understanding narrow; his judgment weak: however feasible might be his projects, yet being formed at unseasonable opportunities, they constantly failed: yet we must not pass over, without their due meed of praise, the gentleness of his temper, his aversion to cruelty and the shedding of blood, his love and patronage of the arts, and his correct moral deportment. Always poor, from his ill-judged profusion, he has been accused of rapacity; yet if we judge dispassionately, we shall find that the aids which he received from his subjects during his long reign, were comparatively of small amount. Deficient in vigour, he was no match for his turbulent barons; and his errors may fairly be attributed to the weakness of his disposition, rather than to any evil intentions of his heart.

F.—This monarch was celebrated for his piety and devotion, according to the fashion of the times. In a conference with Louis the Ninth, king of France, the

* M. Paris.

latter observing, that he would rather hear sermons than masses, Henry replied, that for his part he would prefer to see his loving friend, meaning the real presence in the sacrament, than to hear twenty discourses on his merits.^a This, says Camden, in those days was thought facetious, which some, no doubt, will now consider as superstitious.

A.—Whatever we may judge of the nature of his opinions, his actions were sufficiently superstitious: he once summoned all the great men of his kingdom, to receive an account of a certain sacred benefit which heaven had lately bestowed upon England: when they were all assembled in St. Paul's church, the king acquainted them that the great master of the Knights Templars had sent him a phial of crystal, containing a small portion of the precious blood of Christ; this, he informed them, he designed to carry the next day in solemn procession to Westminster, which ceremony he performed, and holding the phial in both his hands higher than his face, proceeded under a canopy, two assistants supporting his arms; and though the road was deep and miry, he kept his eyes steadily fixed on the holy relic.^b

F.—Henry's excessive zeal for the Christian faith was equalled by his enmity to the Jews. None of his subjects had greater cause of complaint than this persecuted race: exposed both by their religion and their avarice to the hatred of the people, they were robbed and spoiled without measure or mercy.

A.—A remarkable instance of the cruelty with which they were treated in this age, is the well-known story of the Jew of Bristol, who, on refusal to pay King John the sum of ten thousand marks, was condemned to lose one of his teeth every day, till he should com-

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

ply: the Jew had seven teeth drawn, and then paid the sum required.^a In the reign of Henry, notwithstanding the immense profits which they realized by usury, they lost all patience, and desired to retire from the kingdom with their effects, which favour was refused; and the king, after having well fleeced them, delivered them over to his brother, the Earl of Cornwall, that, according to the vivid expression of Matthew Paris, those whom the one had slayed the other might embowel.

F.—To give a better pretext for these extortions, an accusation was revived, that the Jews had crucified a child in derision of the sufferings of Christ: not less than eighteen in number were hanged at one time for this improbable crime.^b

P.—In Chaucer's tales, the scene of a similar enormity is laid in a Christian city of Asia; in which a certain district was inhabited by these people.

As I have said throughout the Jewerie,
This litel child, as he came to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he sing and crie,
O *Alma Redemptoris* ever mo;

and at the end of this story, the old bard alludes to a "young Hew of Lincoln slain also by cursed Jews."

A.—This instance of "young Hew" is one of several stated by Matthew Paris: we can scarcely give credit to such atrocity; yet what will not fanaticism attempt, excited by a long course of contumely and persecution?

F.—The sentiments of an eminent divine, Fuller, on this pillage of the Jews, are curious: "We must herein condemn man's cruelty, but admire heaven's justice; for all these sums extorted from the Jews by temporal kings are but paying their arrears to God, for

^a M. Paris.

^b Ibid.

a debt which they can never satisfy, namely, the crucifying of Christ.

A.—The general prosperity of the kingdom gradually advanced during this reign. The wealth of the citizens of London became conspicuous, as may be inferred from the circumstance that Henry, being about to sell his plate and jewels in order to discharge his debts, and enquiring where he should find purchasers, was answered, the citizens of London. “On my word,” said he, “if the treasury of Augustus were brought to sale, the citizens are able to be the purchasers: these clowns, who forsooth call themselves barons, abound in every thing, whilst we are reduced to necessity.”^a Some improvements took place in the practice of the common law, and the further encroachments of the canon law were resisted. In a parliament held at Merton (1236), the provisions of which are the earliest law which appears in the collection of the statutes, the ecclesiastics urging a conformity to the Roman usage in cases of bastardy, were unanimously answered by the barons with the sentence *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutare*,^b We will not change the laws of England.

F.—I must think that this celebrated reply has been wonderfully extolled beyond its merits: whether children born before wedlock ought to be legitimated by the subsequent marriage of their parents, as is the practice of the canon, though not of the English law, may very fairly be a case for consideration, especially if repairing the wrongs of the innocent be worthy the attention of legislators. In after times, how often has the cry of *Nolumus mutare* been raised, as if it contained an unanswerable argument against the reformation of the most notorious abuses.

P.—How far did literature and the arts keep pace with this happy improvement in the law?

^a M. Paris.

^b Statutes of the Realm, vol. I.

F.—Henry's attachment to the arts has already been alluded to. One chamber in the palace at Winchester was painted green, with stars of gold, and the whole history of the Old and New Testament: a room in Westminster, and another in the Tower, was adorned with the representation of Richard the First's expedition to the Holy Land: we may suppose the execution was but rude, though Matthew Paris highly praises the skill of a certain artist, Walter of Colchester.^a Henry employed and encouraged many other artists;^b nor was the literature of the day without the king's protection: he gave to Master Henry, his poet, a Frenchman, the sum of one hundred shillings, which seem to have been the arrears of an annual stipend;^c and in the same year the further sum of ten pounds: the situation held by this person probably gave rise to the office of poet laureat. It appears that the king had a great book of romance, as in the revenue roll there is an entry of the expense of its silver clasps and studs.

A.—The English tongue made small progress in refinement, and the Latin of the age egregiously retrograded. The archbishop of Canterbury, Kilwarby (1276), found it necessary to protest against the following phrases, commonly used at Oxford, *ego currit, tu currit, currens est ego*.^d

F.—The Latin language, as may well be supposed, was not understood at all by the common people, and but by few of the nobility, yet all acts of parliament are in Latin till the year 1266, when the French tongue was first used: during the reigns of the first two Edwards, the statutes are as frequently drawn in one language as the other; of the numerous acts of parliament of Edward the Third, three or four only are in Latin;

^a M. Paris, Vitæ Abb.

^b Walpole, Anecdotes of Painting. ^c Madox, Hist. of Excheq. p. 268.

^d Ant. à Wood, Hist. Univers. Oxon.

and the French continued to prevail, with few exceptions, till the beginning of the reign of Henry the Seventh; when, from that period, acts of parliament are written uniformly in English.

A.—The great ornament of the reign of Henry the Third, is the historian Matthew Paris, a monk of St. Albans, a man of great talents, learning, and virtue; the date and place of his birth are uncertain; with the king he was on such terms of intimacy, that he was not only employed in his service, but entrusted with his secrets; he was often invited to the table of the monarch, and favoured with intercourse so frequent and friendly, as even to be assisted in the composition of his history of England. “He who wrote this,” says the historian, “was almost constantly with the king in his palace, at his table, or in his closet; and that prince guided his pen in writing, in the most diligent and condescending manner.”

P.—What is the title of the work which received this royal encouragement and assistance.

A.—*Historia Major*, a very full history of England, from the Conquest to the forty-third year of Henry the Third (1259), when the author died. Matthew Paris wrote also the lives of the two Offas, kings of Mercia, and the lives of the first twenty-three abbots of St. Albans. In the first part of his history, Matthew Paris was much indebted to the labours of Roger de Wendover, his predecessor in the office of historiographer in the abbey of St. Albans, and it was continued after his death to the year 1273 by William Rishanger, his successor in the same office. The work is perused with pleasure by every lover of English history and antiquities, notwithstanding the many ridiculous stories of apparitions and miracles which it contains.

P.—But which perhaps may have been a great cause of its popularity.

A.—One of its most extraordinary narratives is the account of the wandering Jew. Matthew Paris relates, that in the year 1228, an Armenian prelate arrived in England, whose servant declared that his master had often entertained this singular personage at his table. Cartaphilus, for that was this Jew's name, when requested to explain his history, used to relate, that being keeper of the judgment-hall under Pontius Pilate, when Jesus passed out of the assembly, he struck him on the back with his hand, and deridingly said, "Go, Jesus, quickly; why dost thou tarry?" But Jesus, with a severe countenance, replied, "I go, but thou shalt tarry till I come." And so, according to the word of the Lord, Cartaphilus yet waited. Whenever he attains his hundredth year, he is seized by an incurable infirmity, and snatched away in an ecstasy; on recovery, he finds himself restored to the same period of life, the age of thirty, at which he was at the passion. As the Christian faith spread abroad, Cartaphilus was baptized by Ananias and took the baptismal name of Joseph; he dwelt in either Armenia, and in other regions of the east, living among bishops and prelates, a man of holy life and conversation, of few words, grave and circumspect, awaiting the second coming of our Lord with fear and weeping; many came to him from all parts of the world, to whose questions he readily answered, but refused their gifts, content with moderate food and clothing.

F.—Cartaphilus seems to have been a more ingenious impostor than some others who have appeared in the same character. In 1547, a person at Hamburgh gave out that he was the wandering Jew, and that at the time of the crucifixion he dwelt at Jerusalem, near the gate leading to Mount Calvary, calling himself Assuerus; he was by profession a shoemaker. Jesus, finding himself fatigued, was desirous of resting in his

dwelling, but the Jew repulsed and struck the Saviour; from that moment he has wandered, and still continues to wander. Assuerus appeared about fifty years of age, of a good figure; but he seemed disconsolate, and groaned often.^a Another pretender appeared in London, at the close of the seventeenth century; but he was an arrant mountebank, and cured all diseases by the touch. He remembered all the apostles, described their features, the colour of their hair, and the clothes which they were accustomed to wear. He spoke various languages, had travelled in all countries of the world, and would continue to wander till the end of it. He was so well informed in general history, that people knew not what to think of him, and even the doctors of the university could not surprise him in any contradiction: he said there was no such thing as a true history in the world: he was particularly acquainted with Mahomet's father: he was present when Rome was set on fire by Nero: he had seen Saladin, and related many particulars of Tamerlane and Bajazet.^b In what way he vanished from England we have no notice; but the authors of the Turkish Spy^c relate that he re-appeared at Astracan, where he added the trade of prophecy to his other impostures.

A.—The Eastern bishop declared that Noah's ark yet remained on the mountains of Armenia. But though Matthew Paris did not soar beyond the credulity of the age and of his profession, yet being the companion of kings, it is highly to his honour that he was not their flatterer. He often expostulated with Henry with the greatest freedom. No historian who has recorded the transactions of his own age, has surpassed this writer in intrepidity: he censured in the plainest language the vices and follies of persons of the highest rank and

^a Calmet, Dictionnaire, tom. 2.

^b Ibid.

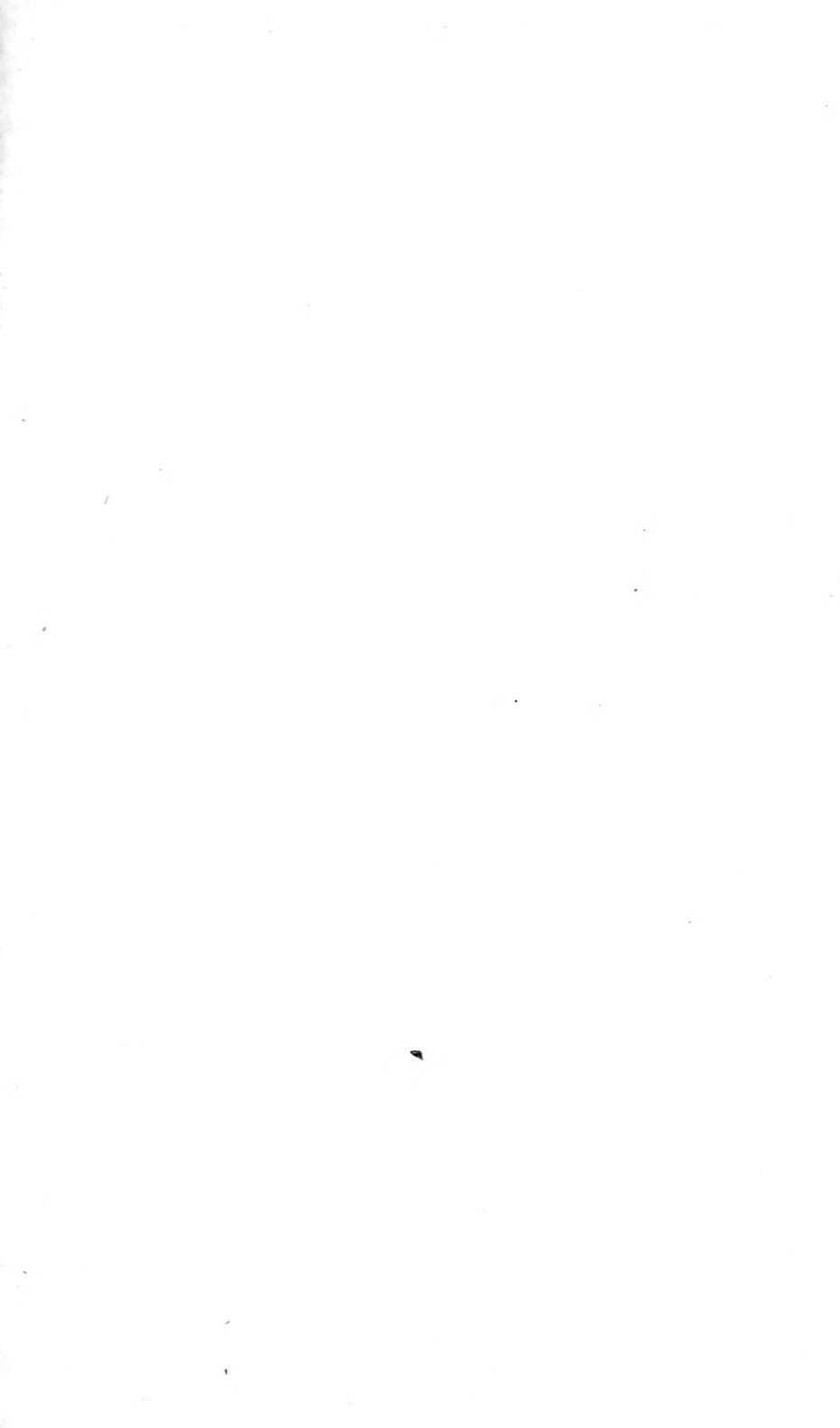
^c Vol. 7.

greatest power ; and in painting the insatiable avarice, intolerable tyranny, unbounded luxury, and abandoned perfidy of the court of Rome, he has not been exceeded, even by Martin Luther himself.

F.—And for this indeed he has never been forgiven by catholic writers, who to this day, feeling sore at his exposures, endeavour to disparage his authenticity.

A.—But certainly with trifling success ; and as at the period in which Matthew Paris wrote, the usurped dominion of the Popes was in its zenith, we must attribute the blame rather to the passions and frailties of human nature, than to the striking recitals of the too faithful historian.

END OF VOLUME THE FIRST.



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Author Clarke, Stephen Reynolds

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